

TOWARD GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF YOUNG ADULT BLACK MALES’
PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School

in the partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in the School of Education,

Indiana University

October 2019

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty of Indiana University, in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

Grandmother – “My Peace.”

Pops - “My Jazz. My Genius.”

Mom – “My Unconditional Believer.”

Cheri – “My No Doubts. My ‘Little’ Sister.”

Jeremysan – “My First Born. My First Aspirational Star.”

Willsan – “My Akashic Twin. My Hebrews 11:1.”

Tylee – “My Baby Girl.”

Kynedi – “My Kyniepooh.” and Tamiko.

FRIENDSHIP

The Triple Threat – “My Evidence of the Ways of God.

TB – “My Big Brotha’ Almigh-T. The Executer of Ad Astra”

The Quintessential Men of Faith – “My Manifestation through Omega”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have received a great deal of support and assistance. However, my chair, Dr. Brendan Maxcy, whose expertise, demeanor, and patience was invaluable in the formulating of the research topic and study development in particular. Additionally, I could never be more indebted to Dr. Peter Seybold for his unwavering support throughout this process and sparking my interest in ‘the sociologicals’ of the world in the first place. And for keeping me grounded and hopeful, last but absolutely not least, thank you Dr. Robin Hughes. The maze of processing did not happen without the knowledge of my friend, Dee Outlaw. Thank you, Dee!

Troy A. Crayton

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PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

There is a gap in our knowledge and understanding of perceptions of political activities, including the influence of education policies, by young adult Black males. There is a gap in our understanding of the formation of perceptions and attitudes. The purpose of this study is to gain a perspective of the perceptions of young adult Black male students regarding civic and political activism. By increasing our knowledge of Black students' experiences and motivations, in relation to perception development, there could be lived experience-based pedagogy that encourages Black young adults to engage politically in a greater proportion. Additionally, such knowledge could provide insight toward being enabled to effectively react to perceived injustices and intolerant outcomes.

Brendan Maxcy, Ph.D., Chair

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Kirshner (2015) argues that there are both structural and instructional barriers to the development of political knowledge and activism of young adult Black males (pp.142-156). Given these barriers, challenges for Black communities' have developed over generations and effected relative public policy in at least two ways. On one hand, Black communities must overcome barriers to gaining knowledge to influence public policy (Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Fazzaro, 2006; Tyack, 1974). On the other hand, Black citizens face ongoing disenfranchisement which limits their respective influence on public representatives' through socially constituent discriminatory practices, institutions, and environments (Anderson, 2014; Borman, Danzig, & Garcia, 2012; de Lancer Julnes, & Johnson, 2011).

This disenfranchisement has perdured through social institutions as mechanisms of laws, subsequent policies, and cultural practices (Anderson, 2014). Additionally, throughout American history, disenfranchisement through social norms and misunderstood cultural contexts among communities have kept the intended effects of eugenics and Jim Crow potent as challenges to the political interests of the oppressed (Brave & Sylva, 2007; Burke & Castaneda, 2007; Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Winfried, 2007). More precisely, cultural practices, social policies, and norms exemplified by Jim Crow, and sociohistoric mechanisms that Winfried (2007) refers to as *collective memory*. Social policies have sustained a social environment that effect Black folks, and more precisely young adult Black males, to require that he assess a level of risk consequently in his calculus to react to his perception of social policies, for example (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 2014; Belgrave & Allison, 2014; Fields & Fields, 2014). An added challenge

to the young Black man that acts as another disenfranchising obstacle to his civil rights and citizenry. Said another way, the young adult Black male must first consider what consequence may come if he reacts in a non-normative manner like the consequences that befell young Black men like Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, or so many others over the years.

While disenfranchisement is well documented, a gap exists in our knowledge and understanding of perceptions of political activities, including the influence of education policies, among young adult Black males. In-fact, as long as these misunderstandings persist, seen and unforeseen, disenfranchising contexts continue to perdure and consciousness of being agents of disenfranchising contexts grows with us. There is also a gap in our understanding of the formation of these perceptions and attitudes. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of young adult Black male students regarding civic and political activism. By increasing our knowledge of Black students' experiences and motivations, in relation to perception development, there could be lived experience-based pedagogy that encourages Black young adults to engage politically in a greater proportion. Additionally, such knowledge could provide insight toward being enabled to effectively react to perceived injustices and outcomes.

Background

Cohen and Chaffee (2013) note that “Not all citizens participate in the electoral process at equal levels; a political activism gap exists such that historically marginalized groups are less likely to be [politically] engaged” (p.44). Belgrave and Allison (2014) would consider such a gap because of meaning-making of phenomena as a result of “perceptions [that] result in a variation of risk linked to self-cognitions [that include the

assessment of] protections, and possibilities” (p.351). Flanagan and Levine (2010) and Edwards (2007) have also found that historically marginalized groups exhibit a delay in being politically engaged at higher levels upon reaching adulthood. Flanagan and Levine (2010), for example, argue that civic engagement beyond young adulthood is linked to whether either participant in this dissertation study feels that doing so would “(fulfill the) human need to belong and to feel that life has a purpose beyond the pursuit of individual gain” (p.160). Such an argument indicates a contribution to a vicious cycle whereby ongoing discrimination and disenfranchisement limit influence on public institutions and environments that marginalize citizens of color (Tyack, 1974; Borman, Danzig, & Garcia, 2012; de Lancer Julnes, & Johnson, 2011).

Disenfranchisement of the Black community has deep historical roots. Anderson (2014) argues that a legislative compromise immediately following the Civil War has had an enduring impact on Black influence in civic policy. To appease certain southern states that otherwise would not agree to the extension of equal citizenship to Blacks after Reconstruction, the 39th U.S. Congress ceded oversight of voting rights to the states. As Reconstruction ended, Southern states implemented social and public policy based in what is known as Jim Crow laws to deny Black citizens the franchise promised by the Fourteenth Amendment (Alexander, 2012; Feagin, 2010; Fields & Fields, 2014; Winfried, 2007). Alexander (2012), and others (Edwards, 2007; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Naughton, 2013) have recorded complementary findings advising that the legacy of the 39th Congress’ disenfranchisement persists. Relative to the area spoken of by Anderson (2014), two of the three participants of this dissertation study grew up and reside in the south-central United States.

Authors provide contemporary examples of the continued existence of disenfranchisement of young adult Black men through public institutions like the judicial and educational systems (Grissom, 2014; Kirshner, 2015; Winfield, 2007). As introduced earlier, Kirshner (2015) found both structural and instructional barriers to the political engagement of Black urban public-school students (pp.142-156). Lopéz (2014) speaks of consciously and unconsciously used communication among educators that maintain discrimination and disenfranchisement, for example. Vedantam (2010) argues for a basis for this distinction between conscious and unconscious awareness in-that folks are influenced predominantly by unconscious biases in the meaning-making, decision-making, and the actions of an individual potentially toward addressing barriers to political engagement.

Another example is argued by Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011) who describe a challenging dynamic contributing to disenfranchisement whereby Black young adults who express feelings of being “victims of” rather than “protected by” law enforcement when in their presence (see also Anyon, 2008; Delpit, 2008; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero & Knight, 2011). Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011) argue for a link to the identity development of youth of color through including that it “can play a role in youths’ perceptions and attitudes concerning police” (p.23). Ryan and Deci (2017) solidify this link through their argument that these perceptions and attitudes are products of identity formation and a judgment toward law enforcement as illegitimate. A portion of their argument explains that

...legitimacy also concerns the content of the laws and policies and the perceived benefits, harms, and fairness of their impacts. Contents that threaten people’s basic needs and their communities should be expected to

inherently engender internal conflicts and thus to be associated with a lesser sense of legitimacy. (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.596)

Conveyance of challenges to the legitimacy of law enforcement by young adult Black men has been prevalent through media (BBC, 2016; Domonoske and Chappell, 2016; Fox, 2016; Kopplin & Miller, 2016). Authors including Bartlett (2009) and Hope, Skoog, and Jagers (2014) advise that narratives through media, for example, present as societal norms like how one should walk, talk, or look often conflict with the community of the young adult Black man. Lawler (2014) reminds us that the heard “contents” of “these knowledges are reiterated in the minutiae of daily life – in doctors’ surgeries, on chat shows, on ‘the radio call in, the weekly magazine column – and inform the relationship of the self to itself” (p.78). And Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) add that narratives consisting of these adverse encounters between Black men and law enforcement maintain normative presumptions that the Black male subjects acted proscriptively (i.e. non-compliant) or against societal norms. Ryan and Deci (2017) include that non-compliance is consistent with a judgment of illegitimacy and as an indication of what they call *pervasive cultural contexts* (p.561) on the identity formation of adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

As represented to this point disenfranchisement of the Black community as an historical and contemporary phenomenon, is well documented. However, review of the literature suggests a gap in our knowledge and understanding-of young adult Black males’ experiences and perceptions of political activism, specifically the influence of current events and experiences in education settings (Baron, Dunham, Banaji, & Carey, 2014; Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Contreras, Schirmer, Banaji, & Mitchell, 2013; Edwards,

2007; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). Evans, Dillon, & Rand (2015) and Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight (2011) exemplify authors that have documented the problem that young adult Black men have with feeling threatened in the presence of law enforcement; in-turn manifesting another context of disenfranchisement and more importantly threat to the lives of these young men.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to explore the perceptions of young adult Black males toward gaining knowledge of their political activism. Pezzulo (2011) and Pine and colleagues (2013), for example, purport that individual social and political identity development is indicative of how perceptions are formed and acted upon. Studies further advise that perceptions are reflective of an individual's knowledge and understanding of that which is perceived (Belgrave & Allison, 2014). Hibbing, Smith, and Alford (2014) argue that there are also physiological influences on individual political tendencies at a subconscious level. These authors elaborate through explaining that environments including living conditions, and the experiences thereof contribute as physiological influences. Their elaboration is exemplified through their stating that these experiences "affect preconscious responses (and) color political judgments" (p.299). Congruent to Hibbing and colleagues (2014) argument and the Statement of the Problem as presented earlier, a purpose for this study includes bringing awareness to a failure to study disenfranchisement of young adult Black men. And that in doing so forms of oppression persist when social contexts, structures, and practices overlook and accept cultural barriers to the franchise of these young men.

Baron, Dunham, Banaji, and Carey (2014) and others (e.g. Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014) advise that educational practices and policies shape the perceptions of secondary Black public-school students toward political activity and this political process. Perceptions may also be influenced by recent events such as the protests in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland, or movements such as Black Lives Matter (Bartlett, 2009; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011). An exploration of these perceptions is important as it provides a window into observing how phenomena within, and without, a person influences their political views toward gaining knowledge of their motivations toward activism (Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015). Lawler (2014) and Ginwright (2010) extend the arguments for linking Black political identity development, political views, and political perceptions thereof.

Throughout this dissertation study, the participants' responses were explored and analyzed through the conceptual lens of *political identity development* as exemplified by the arguments of many authors (Burke & Stets, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ginwright, 2010; Lawler, 2014; Yates & Youniss, 1998). Lawler (2014) suggests a connection between perceptions and the identity of individuals and supports practices that seek knowledge of history and politics as it influences the creation of individual identities (p.161; see also Ginwright, 2010). Yates and Youniss (1998) conducted a study that revealed psychological processes of young adult Black folks' experience in their political identities as they come to understand their own developing social identities. As Yates and Youniss (1998) argue, "youth reflect on values, ideologies, and traditions of their communities and the possible roles they will undertake in adulthood" (p.495).

Collectively Lawler (2014), Yates and Youniss (1998) emphasize that the significance of the process of identity development for young adult Black men in relation to their accepted values, ideologies, and community traditions. Detail for this process and the relationship of values is presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation as emergent reflections of the participants.

A breadth of authors (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Seidman, 2013; Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015) explain that in order to gain an understanding of the participants' perceptions, an observer should gain that knowledge from his process of meaning-making and development of identities in relation to his social experiences. Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, and Henderson-King (2015) include the dimension of meaning generation, including "major social and political events" (p.294), in conjunction with the individuals lived experiences, that influence those perceptions in the meaning-making process.

Significance of the Study

Glaude (2016) presents a disconnect between understandings of political activities through the eyes of Black folks and the proclaimed norms expressed through societal contexts. A contribution from this study could include learning about the emergence and nature of these disconnections between the perceptions of the study participants and their understandings of politics. This disconnection is exacerbated through civic institutions, policies, practices, and its agents. Through a better understanding of these disconnections, insights into how young adult Black men become active political participants and become advocates for social improvement (Glaude, 2016). Increasing our knowledge of Black students' experiences and motivations in relation to political

activism, the study could inform the development of curricula and pedagogies that encourage Black students to engage politically in a greater proportion and with enhanced competence and confidence (Pinar, 2012; Pinar, 2013; Slattery, 2013).

By enhancing knowledge of views of activism among young Black adult males, the knowledge gained from the study becomes available to the Black community and allies to counter the policies and institutional practices that are mechanisms of disaffection and disenfranchisement (Bynner, Romney, & Emler, 2003; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008). Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, and Kindermann (2008), for example, provide from their observations that in the school environment, to increase engagement of students while also decreasing the effects of disaffection, teachers must be mindful of and practice the enhancement of student self-perceptions and feelings of autonomy. And Bynner, Romney, and Emler (2003) argue that six factors associated with young adult identity and political activism are linked to “political engagement, political conservatism, tolerance, personal efficacy, moral conservatism, and environmentalism” (p.326). Although their study includes British young adult students from various social class and ethnicities aged 16-19, the study was engaged with students of western civilizations in-mind in relation to concern for their political engagement. The participants from this dissertation study did disclose reflection of each of these factors including personal efficacy, or a resistance to intolerant social experiences, in various ways as disclosed in Chapters 4 and 5.

As introduced earlier, knowledge gained from this dissertation study contributes to various institutional practices and policies to resist disaffection and disenfranchisement of young adult Black men. Schools were just spoken to but there is also the institution of

law enforcement. Insight into the early development of attitudes toward political activity and civic engagement, may assist actors in civic institutions including educators, policy makers, those in the institution of justice including law enforcement as agents.

Concurrently contributing to the knowledge base from which agents of the institution of justice draw when interacting with, shaping policies for, and practices thereof, that effect Black young adults through disaffection and disenfranchisement.

The knowledge gained from the content of this study; additional information becomes available for young adult Black males may also better understand the nature of disconnections with agents of justice. Expression of specific concerns with this area is detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 also as evidence of its relevancy to the participants in terms of “the political” (Miller, 1980) as a process (Baron, Dunham, Banaji, & Carey, 2014; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). This is significant because better understanding of these social experiences provides nourishment for their perceptions that lead to actions that identify possibilities to impact the institutional supports and practices that have allowed social phenomena, such as disaffection and disenfranchisement, to perdure throughout American history (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 2014; Feagin, 2010; Winfried, 2007). For many authors have found that misunderstanding of cultures and behaviors, through observed social experiences, between Black men and law enforcement contributes to questionable and disproportionate use of force against Black men (Ginwright, 2007; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero & Knight, 2011; Naughton, 2013; Silva Dias & Menezes, 2013). With additional information and understanding these disconnections, conversation and activism across cultures to address disenfranchisement and discrimination gains strength.

Study Approach

Seidman (2013) provides the basis and framework by which this study was engaged. His approach discerns phenomenal meaning of artefacts of lived experiences as reflected upon by a participant given his interpretation. More precisely, through drawing from the reflections of these discernments, Ryan and Deci (2017) and Scott (1990) would argue that to the extent to which the participant has internalized certain social contexts and resists perceived injustices and disenfranchisement. Denzin (1992) supports this approach while endorsing a process of observation and inquiry by a researcher of the participants' reflections. Seidman (2013) explains, "It is only when we step out of the stream of flowing action and through reflection reconstruct the constitutive elements of lived experience that those constitutive elements, 'phenomena' [are exposed]" (p.17). Smith and Osborn (2004; 2007) provide an understanding of phenomena as the experience that we all have through our individual perception. And phenomena in-and-of itself represents a coming to understand and gain meaning of the experience, which consists of a collective of individual phenomenon (Belgrave & Allison, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2004; Seidman, 2013).

Study Design and Methods

The design for this study engaged the nature of an interpretative case study (ICS) structure. The ICS enabled an examination of both psychological and sociological artefacts and phenomena given the reflections of the participants. An ICS also allows for the analysis of these artefacts in relation to individual identities, experiences, and perceptions. To engage the ICS structure, the study design for this dissertation adopted *symbolic interactionism* (SI) as a mechanism of engagement. Denzin (1992) explains

that “Symbolic interaction (the merger of self and social interaction) is the chief means ‘by which human beings are able to form social or joint acts’” (p.25). Influenced by Barnes (1956), Denzin (1992) narrowed his professional foci to the relationships between individual actions as a member of a group. In doing so he advises that a characteristic of SI an individual “gives up the role of spectator and voluntarily commits his [her] freedom to the cause” (p.162). It is the gaining insight into this process, the “merger between self and social interaction” from the perspectives of the participants that is a focus of this study. More detail will be provided of SI, the tool, but first more needs to be disclosed of ICS, the process.

The focusing tool for the study design was based upon what Smith and Osborn (2004; 2007) refer to as *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (IPA). IPA enabled analysis into the participants’ reflections and how they were perceiving the world in different ways based on personality, lived experiences, and our specific motivations, and identity as discussed earlier (Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015). As Smith and Osborn (2004) argue, IPA “attempts to explore/understand/make sense of the subjective meaning of events/experiences/states of the individual” (p.229). This approach allowed the participants to communicate their experiences and perceptions in a manner that, within context, meaning and understanding of civic and political activism may best be revealed.

The study design had four overarching themes to capture “the temporal and transitory nature of human experience; whose understanding is [the response as] subjective meaning; lived experience as the foundation of phenomena; and the emphasis on meaning and meaning in context” (Seidman, 2013, pp.17-19). Yanow and Ybema

(2009) call things such as “(events, experiences, and states) of the individual” artefacts from which individuals gain meaning through hermeneutic processing. Hermeneutic processing of these artefacts allowed for the emergence of meaning for the participants’ through their respective responses (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Yanow & Ybema, 2009). As determined through the analysis of the collected data, the observed artefacts provided objective points for insight into their perceptions and political identity development (Anderies & et.al, 2004; Baldwin, 1992; Baron & et.al, 2014; Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Carter, 2003; Ginwright, 2010).

The methods for executing the study approach included five major activities: participant selection; data collection; data analysis; and quality assurance techniques. The selection of the participants was purposive and consisted of three Black young adult males with an expressed interest in politics and public policy. The selection of this number of participants provide an opportunity to more deeply engage and analyze the data toward revealing their respective individual perceptions for political activism (Bullock, 2010; de los Rios, Lopez & Morrell, 2015; Finlay, 2015).

Data collection must engage activities that allow perceptions to be revealed for how the student gains knowledge toward civic activism (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Seidman (2013) provides the framework for conducting a qualitative interview-based study. The framework consists of interview prompts that allow the participants to reflect upon three stages of the participants’ lives. To execute Seidman’s (2013) general framework, the interview protocol was crafted to elicit reflections specific to the participants’ perceptions of the political. The first question, which represented the first stage, had the goal of establishing a “Focused Life History” (p.21); the second question

represented the second stage aimed to secure “details of [the participants’] experience” (pp.21-22); and the third question represented the third stage that sought to have the participant reflect upon their responses and experiences as an exercise of “[reflecting] on the meaning” (p.22) of “the political” (Miller, 1980) for the participant.

Collectively the stages of the interviews revealed themes that were shared by the participants. For example, each participant revealed the relevance of community in some form in relation to their reflections on the meaning of the political. As suggested by Seidman (2013) and Warren and Karner (2005), given the emergence of common themes such as this, a second interview was conducted of each participant to get a thicker description and context for that relationship.

Throughout the study, attention was paid toward ensuring a representational analysis of the participant’s understanding (Seidman, 2013). Toward that end, the study will employ several quality assurance techniques seek to ensure *credibility*; *confirmability*; *dependability*; *transferability*; and *catalytic validity* of the recorded, and interpreted, data from the participants’ responses (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Trochim, 2006). Detail for each technique is presented in Chapter 3.

Seidman (2013) explains that qualitative research includes “autobiographical roots” for the researcher which enables a capacity to engage my individual lived experiences and intrinsic motivations to maintain focus and energy throughout the study process (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve & Deci, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Accessing such “roots,” however, could provide an environment by the researcher to sprout potentially harmful consequences for the trustworthiness of the study. My positionality as the

researcher remained foremost in consciousness as a mechanism for being aware of these potential biases and positionality separated from the analyses of the participant responses. The occurrences were noted as applicable in Chapter 4 to promote separation from the participants' responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The process for remaining conscious of my positionality, as applicable, included determining and disclosing that positionality; considering the values that I as the researcher bring to that positionality; and self-reflection to determine what my positionality is in relation to the participants. This analysis was determined by providing: 1) the social phenomena that contribute to my positionality; 2) the social relations that contribute to my positionality; 3) the social codes of conduct that contribute to my positionality; and 4) the norms, behaviors, and value systems that contribute to my positionality. Given that the literature advises that moral conviction is a primary driver to the behaviors of young adults there was an offer to have a follow-up inquiry, not to exceed ninety minutes, if the participants presented moral concerns. Consequently, no participants had no concerns with our experiences.

Limitations

Creswell (2007, 2008) and many others (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hattam, Brennan, & et.al, 2009; Shenton, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Vedantam, 2010; Warren & Karner, 2005), in forms, speak of limitations to any qualitative study that related primarily to *the use of internal evaluation* (i.e. coding and theming given my translation in context) as part of the process of interacting with the participants. The engagement of internal evaluation by the researcher introduce limitations with the potential for: 1) subconscious restraints that hide characteristics of the participants' perceptions

(Vedantam, 2010); 2) the participants' respective memories of exposure to civic and political phenomena may not be "accurate" (Creswell, 2007, 2008); 3) the potential that the participant may not feel comfortable with the researcher potentially resulting in a failure to disclose information (Creswell, 2007, 2008); and 4) there is the potential for there to be conflicting purposes and goals for the study between the participant and myself as the researcher (Warren & Karner, 2005).

Next, there is the potential for *limitations to evaluating perceptions* (Creswell, 2007, 2008). During the study process, there will be a distinction between learning *how the participant* gains knowledge, and, *how the researcher* is interpreting how the participant is gaining, and has appeared to gain, knowledge about civic phenomena (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Then, there will be *limitations of the researcher positionality* (Creswell, 2007, 2008). These limitations could stem from: 1) difference in cultural knowledge between the participant and myself as the researcher; 2) unconscious biases that I have (Vedantam, 2010); 3) generational difference between myself and the participants (Ganga & Scott, 2006); 4) a potential class difference between myself and the participants (Ganga & Scott, 2006); and 5) from there potentially being a perceived power-difference by the participants of me that may affect interactions (Ganga & Scott, 2006).

There are sociohistorically based challenges to the full realization of political engagement by folks of the Black community. As revealed earlier, on one hand, young adult Black men must overcome barriers to gaining knowledge to influence public policy in a manner that advances his interests (Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Fazzaro, 2006; Tyack, 1974). On the other hand, young adult Black men face ongoing disenfranchisement

through discriminatory social contexts and the maintenance of these contexts through both realized and unrealized social norms (Anderson, Borman, Danzig, & Garcia, 2012; de Lancer Julnes, & Johnson, 2011). In Chapter 2, there will be a substantive and theoretical review of the literature to establish a foundation for gaining the knowledge sought to address the purpose of the study while developing literature as a contribution to the problems presented here in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 will initiate through a substantive review of the literature and will culminate with a theoretical review of the literature. The substantive review will provide a basis from which to base our understanding of ‘politics’ given the many versions presented in literature. There will then be an assessment of disenfranchisement as presented through the education system and various social structures. To provide some insight into the nature of these structures, the literature will be drawn from in terms of the interplay among cultures, developing perceptions and moralities in the process of political meaning-making. And then the exploration will move onto gaining knowledge of the association of cultural norms, social engagement, and general normative beliefs as contributors to the political identity development of young adult Black men.

Toward providing bases between the social contexts of the political and the process of meaning-making and identity development for the participants, the following areas will then be explored: social engagement and attitudes; social engagement and moral convictions; internalization and social norms; and distinctions between cultures. And the substantive portion of the review will conclude with an exploration of disenfranchising social practices as a sociohistoric social force to young adult Black men. And then the theoretical review of the literature will delve into direction provided

through social influences and developments of political identity and perceptions. As the section states, the goal for this portion of the chapter will be toward developing hypothetical directions for resolving the problems and challenges reflected upon by the participants. The areas of detailed exploration will include perceived norms, values, and discriminatory social contexts; intersectionality as a contributor to civic activism; and accountabilities, expectations, and the process of racial identity development as a portion of the participants' respective identities overall.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The goal for this study is to gain knowledge of the perceptions of young adult Black men concerning “the political” (Miller, 1980) in relation to their civic and political activism. Miller (1980) argues that use of the term “political” is equivocal, but not ambiguous. The “political” refers to “what (some phenomenon) does by applying some principles of signification (and thus) does not have a fixed reference” (p.57). Said another way, how one person perceives what is political may be different from the next person. Chapter 4 of this study, for example, reveals meaning of the “political” for its participants consisting of three phenomena as themes, for example.

Many authors have argued that perceptions are affected by social experience (Baldwin, 1992; Christens, Peterson, Reid, Garcia-Reid, 2015; Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, & Motyl, 2016; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). The central problem that the study addresses our lack of knowledge of the perceptions of young adult Black men and their development of political identity. By neglecting to do either, disenfranchisement is manifest by first not learning more to address said disenfranchising contexts. And by not discerning specifically what it is about those social contexts that act as pervasive challenges to young adult Black men’s choices concerning the political, like certain social norms, cultural norms, or ideologies. The term manifest should be emphasized here given that this study is dependent upon the reflections and responses of the participants. Baldwin (1992) and Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, and Motyl (2016), for example, argue that individuals’ perceptions of social experiences are distinct from others based, in-part, from their interpersonal experiences. Baldwin (1992) contributes to the argument when stating that

(t)he elements of a relational schema (or cognitive structures representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness) include an interpersonal script for the interaction pattern, a self-schema for how self is experienced in that interpersonal situation, and a schema for the other person in the interaction. (p.461)

Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, and Motyl (2016) take Baldwin's (1992) argument a step further by linking relational schema to ideology and the detection of prejudices. Lakoff (2002) and Ryan and Deci (2017) would emphasize that contexts of disenfranchisement could be born of conflicting ideologies especially when one is perceived to be dominant or conveyed as the norm through social contexts. They convey from their studies that "liberals' and conservatives' prejudices manifest to roughly equal degrees across a variety of prejudice measures, including political intolerance (i.e. denial of rights)" (p.4). Prejudice is not the only cognitive judgment exercised by liberals and conservatives, of course (Lakoff, 2002). However, when prejudice is exercised through intolerance, it can manifest into the denial of another's rights through various social barriers that then affect the cognitive processes and perceptions of folks like our participants (Kirshner, 2015). And those barriers, moreover, reveal through both structural and instructional forms.

Kirshner (2015) advises that there have been persistent structural and instructional barriers to Black folks fully participating as citizens throughout American history. This history is nothing new given the wealth of recorded literature of Jim Crow policies and practices, for example (Feagin, 2010, 2014; Hobolt, Tilley & Wittrock, 2013; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Wood, 2014). The specific barriers of interest for this dissertation, however, illuminate the nature of these barriers that have influenced the ability for Black folks to perceive the political and to engage political activism. Feagin (2010) identifies a barrier as social phenomenon that has historically disenfranchised

Black folks. He calls this social barrier as “the white racial frame” (p.19). Many authors have conveyed content that adds context and dimension to this phrase, white racial frame (Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Heitzeg, 2015; Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jacobson, 2015) as an umbrella title to the many disenfranchising policies and practices throughout American history (Edwards, 2007; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Wood, 2014). Education has been identified as both a contributing vessel for such disenfranchisement and influence upon the perceptions and activities of Black folks in the political sphere. But it has also been identified as a way by which skills may be acquired and the disenfranchising elements to the political perceptions of young adult Black men, including disenfranchising social barriers, may be overcome (Diemer & Li, 2011; Pacheco, 2008).

As introduced in Chapter 1, the balance of this chapter will culminate a substantive review of the literature and then a theoretical review of the literature. The substantive review will provide a basis from which to base our understanding of ‘politics’ given the many versions presented in literature. There will then be an assessment of culture, morality, and a hidden social grammar of disenfranchisement as presented through social contexts, structures, and norms upon the perceptions of the participants. And the substantive portion of the review will conclude with an exploration of disenfranchising social practices as a sociohistoric social force to young adult Black men. And then the theoretical review of the literature will delve into direction provided through social influences and developments of political identity and perceptions.

A goal for this portion of the chapter will be toward developing hypothetical directions for resolving the problems and challenges reflected upon by the participants.

The areas of detailed exploration will include perceived norms, values, and discriminatory social contexts; intersectionality as a contributor to civic activism; and accountabilities, expectations, and the process of racial identity development as a portion of the participants' respective identities overall.

A Substantive Review of the Literature: Disenfranchisement of Young Adult Black Males

The literature has many works about the effects of disenfranchisement, pertaining to matters of civics *education*, i.e. knowledge of the U.S. Constitution; the democratic process, for example, and politics, as perceived by young adult Black males (Edwards, 2007; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Wood, 2014). On another hand, Edwards (2007) and Hess and McAvoy (2015) present that youth are not apathetic to political activism. Their findings speak to disenfranchisement also. Disenfranchisement for them includes the influence of state induced barriers that contribute to a social environment of disenfranchisement for marginalized communities. Berger and Luckmann (1967) provide an ontological perspective that frames a consideration of disenfranchisement through the lenses of a nature for the “how” and “why” of the social barriers of disenfranchisement. In other words, they reveal that the nature of the “how” and “why” of these barriers could reveal characteristics of disenfranchisement. Said another way, an understanding for that how and why social constructions influence an individual at the point of which the process of internalization would initiate.

The Edwards' (2007) study was conducted in Australia with “marginalized” youth and their perceptions when interacting through political participation. The literature consists of examples to the how and why an individual can come to perceive social

structures (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994; Deci & Flaste, 1992). Australia is like the United States in that it is democratic society with a general normative culture that is based from individualistic interests, as opposed to collective type societies exemplified in certain Asian cultures, for example (King & McInerney, 2014; Rolls, 2012; Shaules, 2015). Beyond understandings for similarities and contrasts between young adults in different countries, the process of internalization via perceptual processing between an individual and societal structures is compatible despite cultural difference (Crossman, 2016).

The nature of this general normative culture, then, is said to be linked to the individual interests of folks within each society. Further consideration of the nature of this link will be considered between general normative culture and the individual, his perceptions, and his respective moral convictions (Crossman, 2016; Porter, 2013). Crossman (2016) explains that “Sociologists believe that norms govern our lives by giving us implicit and explicit guidance on what to think and believe, how to behave, and how to interact with others” (p.1). Ryan and Deci (2017) continue by linking this explanation of culture to individual processes of choice making given the extent to which social contexts have been internalized and are acted upon against the satisfaction of his basic psychological needs. Lending to the potential of an existing pervasive perception of young adult Black men, Porter (2013) argues that “heightened moral identity decreased the probability that students engaged in traditional political activities [in part because] students may perceive politics as morally unsavory and this perception may be fed by the current national climate” (p.250).

Culture, morality, and a hidden social grammar of disenfranchisement.

Recalling an excerpt from Chapter 1, López (2014) speaks of consciously and unconsciously used communication among educators that maintain discrimination and disenfranchisement. Vedantam (2010) was then injected to present and argue that folks are influenced an estimated 75% by unconscious biases that are learned from societal contexts and norms. These contexts and norms, moreover, contribute to the processes of perceiving, meaning-making, decision-making, and the actions of an individual toward addressing barriers to political engagement in the first place. Jackson III (2012) speaks to the importance of culture through arguing that “the essence of culture (is) a meaning-making system” (p.37). Culture, however, has a distinct meaning among individuals. Although many cultures may be experienced by a young Black man, ‘his’ culture consists of his everyday encounters and experiences that differ from ‘other’ cultures (King & McInerney, 2014). Such differences exemplify how person ‘A’ who has internalized a culture ‘A’ given how person ‘A’ has experienced culture ‘A’. As such, person ‘A’ may not be able to identify how or why person ‘B’ has internalized culture ‘B’ given how person ‘B’ has experienced culture ‘B’. Thus, exemplifying a potential for the manifestation of such potentially disenfranchising interactions, if not addressed.

Jackson III (2012) explains that there are several social phenomena that contribute to the internalization of a culture as part of the identity development of the participants of the study. Of the several phenomena, each was expressed among the participants through their reflections and expressions in their respective interviews. Jackson III (2012) explains the first phenomena, or categorization, as *philosophy*. Jackson III (2012) explains that each culture has philosophically developed, and convey, norms consisting

of “beliefs about existence, knowledge, values, and reasons” (p.38). Morality is developed and or reacted upon given the participants’ accepted understandings for each of these areas collectively, and respectively (Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Wisneski, Lytle, & Skitka, 2009). A second category includes *customs and traditions*. Customs are defined as “a habitual practice [understood as] the usual way of acting in given circumstances” (Jackson III, 2012, p.38), and traditions are defined as “a ritual (or) belief, belief, or object passed down within a society, still maintained within the present, with origins in the past” (Jackson III, 2012, p.38). Each is exemplified, specifically through mechanisms of whiteness later in this section, in Chapter 4, and discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. A third category of culture presented as *collective history* (Jackson III, 2012).

Collective history is explained as “shared experiences of a social/racial group over time” (Jackson III, 2012, p.38). There shall be an elaboration of collective history in intergenerational terms later in this section. A next category of culture refers to the *communication or language* utilized. Communication and language is defined as a “body of words and the systems for their use common to a people who are of the same community or nation (Jackson III, 2012, p.38). Community shall be discussed in Chapter 5 as an emergent part of the participants’ reflections and as a significant part of the findings or themes from this study. An example of this categorization is the genesis, development, and use of hip-hop terms and vernacular established etically by the urban community in New York City as political expression (Spence, 2011). And the last categorization is presented as his *family structure*. Family structure is described as “the composition and membership of the *family* and the organization and patterning of

relationships among individual *family* members” (Jackson III, 2012, p.38). The participants refer to family structure in varying significances related to their respective political development. Those references are presented and discussed respectively in Chapters 4 and 5.

Cultural norms, social engagement, and general normative beliefs.

Mondal (2016) refers to an understanding of social norms as “a shared expectation of behaviour that connotes what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate” (pp.1-2). Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) correlate the significance of establishing this understanding of social norms with etic and emic cultures. They advise that “social norms ought to be understood as a kind of grammar of social interactions. Like a grammar, a system of norms specifies what is acceptable and what is not in a society or group” (p.1). Of specific interest is inclusion of the phrase that makes a distinction between “a society and group.” Given Bicchieri and Muldoon’s (2014) position, social norms, since they are representative of acceptable components of a culture, they can also be of an etic or an emic kind. And, moreover, social norms for society may not be acceptable for a group within that society. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the participants commonly refer to forms of disenfranchisement as political reflection. To look more into this distinction in culture and the norms thereof, this theme of disenfranchisement will continue to inform this literature review. The nature of emergent form of knowledge discovery and development shall be detailed in Chapter 3.

Authors have argued that American society consists of a norm of social grammar, or system of language or communicating, that has acted as a mechanism for the maintenance of the disenfranchisement of Black folks (Crawford, Brandt, & colleagues,

2016; Skitka, Liu, & colleagues, 2012; Feagin & Ducey, 2019). Scott (1990) argues for the resistance that oppressed folks have in response to social contexts that challenge his striving for satisfying his best interests. Resistance to disenfranchisement being indicative of an internal decision-making processing with some level of turmoil for a participant. And that the existence of a need to resist evidences dominant ideologies in the mechanisms of pervasive social norms and contexts, like those with discrimination. Scott (1990) argues further that manifestations of ideology are sources of discrimination that are in-turn maintained by systems of language and communicating with ideology which is a system of political ideas and ideals. An example of an ideological representation of disenfranchisement includes what has been referred to as “the white racial frame” (Evans, Dillon & Rand, 2015; Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Feagin & Ducey, 2019) or sometimes called “whiteness” (Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Feagin and Ducey, 2019; Frankenberg, 1999; Heitzeg, 2015).

Heitzeg (2015) has produced a study that argues that what has come to be known as the white racial frame represents a general social norm while also being a standard for normative beliefs. Heitzeg (2015) was a follow-up study given findings earlier by Feagin and Cobas (2008) and Feagin (2010). These studies exemplify a situation whereby an accepted social norm of society is not acceptable to a group within it. Authors like Scott (1990) and Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King (2015) have produced studies exhibiting resistance by folks of the Black communities and cultures to norms of whiteness. A closer look at the idea of resistance will be engaged later in this section.

Feagin and Cobas (2008) include in their argument that “whiteness” as a socially accepted “‘common sense’ [that] includes important racial stereotypes, understandings,

images, and inclinations to act” (p.39). Feagin and Cobas (2008) explain “common sense” as the context and spirit of whiteness, or the frame in other words. They ground the idea of this “common sense” as a *weltanschauung*, or as a product of, “the dominant society’s deep assumptions” (Feagin & Cobas, 2008, p.40) as the adopted worldview, or etic worldview, by folks in a society. Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu & Xu (2012) exemplify the depth at which such worldviews affect individual perceptions of folks through arguing that any deviation from these behaviors in society is commonly interpreted as an exhibition of mental illness or indicative of criminal behavior. In-fact, Heitzeg (2015) and others (Jacobson, 2015; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011) consciously and Vedantam (2010) unconsciously associate deviations from norms when exhibited by Black folks. The participants, collectively, presented such reflection during the interview exchanges. An event that was well documented and reported is the shooting of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. The participants each reflected upon and provided feedback to this incident, as documented in Chapters 4 and 5. Briefly, that documentation refers to contexts of conflict with their individual moralities and self-interests that conflicted with those reflections on the incident with Trayvon.

Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu and Xu (2012) conducted a study to investigate relationships between moral convictions, attitudes, and political or social intolerance. This investigation included considerations of individual and group attitudes, given moral and cultural contexts, as a dynamic for decisions to act. Politically, the results of their study suggests that moral convictions do not conclusively predict “higher levels of political intolerance” (Skitka, Liu Yang, Chen, Liu, & Xu, 2012, p.5) of folks who have different attitudinal positions. In other words, they argue that although attitudes and

moral convictions may differ between folks, there is consistent belief that all folks should have certain rights, freedoms, and liberties, for example. The literature has more to say about the attitudes and moral convictions through which social and political intolerances are determined. And the natures through which civic and political acts precipitate given these determinations as well.

Skitka and Morgan (2014) define *attitudes* as “positive or negative evaluations of people, places, things, events, or ideas” (p.96). Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu and Xu (2012), it should be noted, correlate individual attitudes as social intolerance and moral convictions with group attitudes. They argue that “moral convictions can be associated with collectivistic, and not only autonomous, concerns” (p.5). Notably, authors like Porter (2013) and Skitka and colleagues (2012) make a distinction between social intolerance and political intolerance. Linking the distinctions to moral convictions, Porter (2013) advises that moral convictions have substantial influence over civic actions, political identity and degrees of political tolerance for Americans. Porter (2013) explains that civic action is a product of attitudes, determination of moral conviction, and the development of certain political attributes. The attributes of civic action are a “broad range of civic attitudes, beliefs, interests, skills and behaviors,” (Porter, 2013, p.241) and political activism is an outward representation of his civic action through political acts (Erickson, 1994; Porter, 2013). The nature of those political acts is a product of the extent to which a social experience affects an individual’s civic attributes positively or negatively.

Evans, Dillon, and Rand (2015) suggest that when an individual is presented with a social dilemma an individual reacts, either through reflection or intuitively, in

conjunction with how his attributes are affected. How he reacts depends on whether he does so predominately through reflection, or predominately through instinct or how he “feels” about the encounter. Hibbing, Smith, and Alford (2014) speak to context for which reflection and intuitiveness is engaged as dependent upon whether that which is being engaged qualifies as “negative” for individuals. Is he comfortable with that which is being engaged, or not? The initiation of such an affective conflict with one’s identity and moral make-up brings to mind DuBois’ conception of double consciousness (Walker, 2019) which is explored more deeply in relation to the study participants later in Chapters 4 and 5. Hibbing and colleagues (2014) warn the reader that “those attuned to the negative in life might take steps to avoid it, perhaps by refraining from taking chances with the unknown, by following instructions, and by sticking to the tried and true” (Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014, p.303). This representation will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

Determinations and intolerances including attitudes and moral convictions are a complex of reflective and intuitive states of being (Evans, Dillon, & Rand, 2015). Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu & Xu (2012) exemplify a more reflective determinant when participants of their study weigh a level of intolerance in conveying “that Americans nonetheless maintain a strong commitment to the civil rights of even those with whom they morally disagree” (p.5). It is counterintuitive to accept that Americans conditioned by disenfranchising social norms have “a strong commitment to the civil rights [of] those with whom they morally disagree” (Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu & Xu, 2012, p.5). Skitka and Morgan (2014) provide a basis toward understanding Skitka and colleagues (2012) suggestion, respectively, from their studies of human self-motivation as a basis for

acting through a lens of a more simultaneous consideration of both moral conviction and attitudes.

Skitka and Morgan (2014) suggest that moral convictions are “a meta-cognition that people may have about a given attitude [that is] grounded in core beliefs about fundamental right and wrong” (p.96). The inclusion of the phrasing “right and wrong” suggests a state of intolerance under consideration when moral conviction is engaged. As conveyed in their study, moral convictions not only provide some insight into attitudes of individuals’, as an association of those moral convictions, and their relationship to levels of self-motivations, it also provides insight into social, and political, implications given attitudes. The phrase “core beliefs” recalls the suggestion earlier whereas beliefs, along with attitudes, are attributes of civic action thereby further suggesting that political intolerance can be impetus for political behavior. In-fact, this phrase provides more insight into the role of “moral conviction” that contributes to advancing the benefits of this literature review and deserves closer consideration.

Firstly, attitudes – as a role player in the determinations of moral convictions - are a summing-up as to whether a person has a positive or negative feeling, or *intuitive* summation, about “people, places, things, events, and ideas” (Skitka & Morgan, 2014, p.96). And those attitudes in partnership with core beliefs play a part in the degree to which a person intuitively reacts when engaged by “people, places, things, events, and ideas.” And lastly, considering the partial phrase of “right or wrong,” Wisneski, Lytle, and Skitka (2009), Mondal (2016) and others (Heiphetz, Spelke & Banaji, 2014; Porter, 2013) have found that motivations to act given a “right or wrong” calls into question the extent to which certain norms or morality are products of cultural conditioning, for

example. Cultural conditioning becomes significant in consideration of tolerances because of the distinction between the exhibition of a participant's internalization of pervasive social contexts and how he is judged by others. Kirshner (2015) suggests a distinction between use of the terms 'civic' and 'political' when addressed in the literature.

Kirshner (2015) uses the term "civic" to make a distinction that is both relevant and very important to the purpose of this study. The term "civic" includes the nature of motivation for an individual that is intrinsic to causing one to act. As he states, the term civic is not "(intended to mean) the study of the three branches of government, how a bill becomes a law, or the U.S. Constitution (but rather to emphasize) on engaging youth in action to solve problems in their everyday lives" (p.136). Civic "activism," therefore, will be based on what Kirshner calls "action civics" or "enabling youth to practice civic participation through authentic projects" (p.136). As will be elaborated upon later, Ball and Dagger (2002) for example, explain that use of the term "political" is an influence *on* one's identity. Simply put, the term "civic" refers to *motivations from within* and the term "political" refers to *motivations from without*.

Porter (2013) continues with distinguishing between "civic" and "political" with the role of individual moral conviction and identity. As she states:

identity is linked to civic action by the assumption that individuals are motivated to act in ways consistent with their core self. Specifically, if civic (e.g. moral and political) values occupy a central place in one's self, it follows that one will act in accordance with one's civic values. (p.240)

To continue the presentation of "motivations from without," or the "political," upon Black persons' moral convictions, Southern Democrats established legislation in 1899 that introduced the early days of Jim Crow. As an individual Black person

processing policy practices such as Jim Crow, for example, Porter (2013) finds that moral identity has been “proposed as one factor that might bridge the gap between internal processes, such as moral reasoning and moral emotion, and action” (p.240). Continuing a track of potential action for Black folks, Blacks could not vote unless they could read and write a section of the U.S. Constitution. Skitka and Morgan (2014) found that in the event of feelings of illegitimacy when interacting with authorities, “people may be willing to step outside of usual normative boundaries against vigilantism or violence in the name of their [respective] moral beliefs” (p.104). The effects of such illegitimacies exist even today with voter identification laws, police action shootings, and extreme imbalances in the number of Black folks in prisons, for example (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 2014; Semuels, 2017).

And finally, culture may have a significant effect qualitatively based on a finding by Skitka and Morgan (2014). Skitka and Morgan (2014) conducted a study of moral conviction and political tolerance for dissimilar cultures - the United States and China, respectively. As they state, “moral conviction does not predict political intolerance similarly across these cultural contexts. Moral conviction predicts greater willingness to withhold political freedom from those with different points of view in China, *but not* the United States” (p.103, italics added). This statement presents the idea that no one in the United States has the willingness to withhold political freedom from those with different points of view, is generalized.

The literature has more to say about the interplay among moral conviction, political intolerance, and the influence of cultures on an individuals’ behavior toward gaining knowledge of dissimilarity across cultural contexts, perceptions of individuals,

and motivations of those who are the contexts (Hibbard, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu & Xu, 2012; Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Strauss, 1992). And if considered further, there must be a determination for whether the involved individuals' have interest in the issue or issues that make-up the contexts (Deci & Flaste, 1996). Moreover, a representation for the culture within which the individual's interests were derived (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992).

Deci and Flaste (1996) in their findings toward understanding individual motivations, advise that levels of interest must be considered when analysis of cultural influence is in-play. Toward initiating an understanding of individual motivation, Strauss (1992) presents that cultural messages engage and provide potential stimulus for which an individual potentially interacts. Berger and Luckmann (1967) advise that society exists as both subjective and objective reality for an individual. Strauss (1992) addresses the subjective-objective complexity of coming to understand an individual's reality through considering motivations. As he states, an individual's motivation depends on deciding whether society's "dominant ideologies, discourses, and symbols [and how they] become compelling to social actors" (p.1) is relevant, and tolerated, given the individual's moral convictions. Overall, as substantiated by Evans, Dillon, and Rand (2015), Strauss (1992) advises, a society needs for its inhabitants to internalize societal norms. However, the process of internalization requires another complex process that involves the nature of which the individual accepts those norms; to what degree his personality and identity accepts those norms, in other words (Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014; Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King & Henderson-King, 2015).

Internalization may potentially occur for an individual through cultural influence, moral convictions, and or intrinsic motivations of the individual (Deci & Flaste, 1992; Strauss, 1992). Ryan and Deci (2017) and Deci and Flaste (1992) argue that there are two processes by which internalization presents for an individual, *introjection* and *integration*. The first perspective, *introjection*, “is essentially one of exerting external controls to program people’s behavior [which translates to a] perspective that sees socialization as something that gets done *to* people” (Deci & Flaste, 1992, p.92). Kirshner (2015) provides an example through results of his study of the discounting of youths’ opinions on the potential closing of their school. This action, called political justification, was done to these students despite their interests (Kirshner, 2015). Concerning issues of students’ school, political justification means “that youth articulated interests [are] discounted in the decision-making process and that challenged prevailing assumptions about school quality” (Kirshner, 2015, p.101). “Politics and policies” for Cohen (2010), “help determine the quality of economic and educational systems, chances for civic and political participation, even how standards of morality will be used to influence someone’s status in society” (p.3).

Cohen (2010) has exemplified the introjection of social contexts and a process of internalization that must be assimilated if a young Black male aspires to improve his “status in society.” Cohen’s (2010) illumination of the social context through which political justification acts as a serious challenge to the political, and civic, development of young Black males. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012), for example, add credence to an interrelationship between the phenomena of “civic” and “political” through the discussion of hermeneutics and interpretation in later chapters. Cohen (2010) provides insight into

politics and policy as things that are done to Black male youth in America because of the “uncertain place of young black people in our political communities” (Cohen, 2010, p.3). Glaude (2016) advises that Black community institutions are importance keystones like the Black church; but these institutions are diminishing increasing the gap of political knowledge and influence on an individual level.

The second perspective, *integration*, speaks to the addressing of an individual’s psychological needs by which “internalization as a proactive process in which the developing child transforms external prompts into internal prompts” (Deci & Flaste, 1992, pp.92-93). Deci and Ryan (1985) would advise that although having its genesis in not being of interest to the individual, for the individual to “transform” the societal stimuli from an “external prompt into [an] internal prompt.” And as a part of their mini theory called organismic integration theory (OIT), Ryan and Deci (2017) elaborate that the process of internalization of societal or extrinsic contexts is on a continuum with introjection and integration being in polar positions to each other and a third position being identification. They present that a participant exhibiting “*regulation through identification*” describes extrinsic motivation that has been accepted personally valued and important” (pp.191-192). In sum, this continuum of internalization is indicative of the extent to which extrinsic contexts regulate a participants’ capacity to behave autonomously (fully accepted intrinsic assimilation/integration) or heteronomously (conditional acceptance based from external contingencies/introjection).

Denzin (1992) would refer to this process as a form of interpretivism. Intrinsic motivation occurs when what they labeled organismic needs, i.e. needs of the individual, are addressed. Additionally, there are three associations that serve as the impetus for an

individual acting intrinsically. Those three associations are: feelings of autonomy; feelings of competence; and feelings of relatedness to an external prompt. Deci and Flaste (1992), however, warn that the presentation of these three associations is not enough.

Although Deci and Ryan's (1985) associations of intrinsic motivation are indicative of an individual's self-determination given an external prompt, two of the individual associations retain traits of an introjected internalization. Deci and Flaste (1992) advise that autonomy is by nature adopted as an integrated external prompt. "The key to whether people are living autonomously is whether they feel, deep within themselves, that their actions are their own choice" (Deci & Flaste, 1992, p.87). And competence and relatedness are by nature introjects. An example of the nature of these introjects are instances whereby an individual student may not have interest in attending school. Deci and Flaste (1992) provide the following example, as they state,

to satisfy the need for relatedness – children make accommodations, and they are naturally inclined to accept values and rules of their immediate groups, and of society. Through making such accommodations – through internalizing values and behavioral regulations – children learn to competently negotiate the social terrain. (p.93).

Values and rules are important characteristics for any society. Social norms of society control individual experiences, their respective groups, and cultures all contribute to the internalization of social norms (Strauss, 1992). As presented earlier, through either emic or etic stimuli (Jackson III, 2012). This dissertation will seek the influence of etic stimuli on the perceptions of Black adolescent males as an internalizing force upon civic activism. Strauss (1992) and Deci and Flaste (1992), for example, link individuals' group, their institutions, culture, and lived experiences influence the perceptions and motivations of the respective individual. When presented with dissimilar contextual

frames of emic cultures' individuals or groups, the environment for introjection of norms becomes adversarial among each groups' members (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016; Heitzeg, 2015; Huggins & Debies-Carl, 2015; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero & Knight, 2011; Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu & Xu, 2012; Strauss, 1992). This adversarial introjection of norms, specifically given the findings of Porter (2013), for example, substantiate such engagements based from moral convictions of individuals.

Evans, Dillon, and Rand (2015) provide another dimension of the frame and potential effects upon actions when faced with normative beliefs presented from and individual perceptions of the social environment. Mondal (2016) provides dimension to the normative belief dynamic in stating that "Societies exist because through the internalisation of norms, human agents monitor their behaviour in anticipation of sanctions, i.e., reward and punishment from other social actors" (p.4). The primary question for their study was is there correlation between an individual's reaction time (RT) and whether the decision to act was based upon reflection or intuition? The conclusion of their findings is that "correlational RTs were primarily related to feelings of conflict, and the extent to which participants strongly preferred one option over others. Moreover, the effects of conflict on RTs were dissociable from the manipulation of intuition versus reflection" (Evans, Dillon, & Rand, 2015, p.962).

De Cremer, Wubben, and Brebels (2008) conducted a study whereby an individual's reaction to authority depends upon the emotion evoked when engaged. For De Cremer, Wubben, and Brebels (2008), the emotions of anger, shame, and guilt are related to a person's perception of an authority when engaged. They argue that if the study participant was observed as exhibiting shame or guilt, the authority figure was

being perceived as “fair” to the participant. If the subject was observed as being angry, the participant perceived the authority figure as being unfair to the participant. Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) would add that these perceptions of fairness are related to levels of internalization for the participants in terms of the participant’s acting via *prescription* (in compliance to social norms) or *proscription* (not complying to social norms). Jackson III (2012) suggests contextual frames through which bases for dissimilar beliefs and actions precipitate, and in-turn affect participant decisions to perceive, process, react, and interact with folks of different cultural bases for interactions. Some additional attention is spent on the contributors to these decisions as the participants of this dissertation study exhibit internalization through their reflections. Detail of these reflections are disclosed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

King and McInerney (2014) substantiate that individuals of differing cultures is a dynamic for consideration when evaluating individual perceptions by exploring the social distinctions of *etic* and *emic*. They suggest that when evaluating culture of an individual, one should consider “both etic (culturally universal [similar despite culture]), or the “acceptable” norms of society, and emic (culturally specific [exclusive within a culture and community])” characteristics of motivation to act (p.175, parenthesis added). Burke and Stets (2009) warn that “a symbol [like a contextual frame] derives its meaning from social consensus and is arbitrary, varying from one culture to another” (p.11). As observed through the context of the participants’ reflections, certain interactions with unfamiliar emic interactions produce conflict and difficulty in knowing how to interact. Certain interactions like reaction time in situations as exemplified in the immediately preceding section. For detail, see Chapters 4 and 5 as the participants reflect upon their

exchanges about Trayvon Martin incident. Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill (2014) and others (e.g. Glaude, 2016; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero & Knight, 2011) argue that ignorance of differing cultures nourish dissimilarity, or disconnects, in understanding due to dissimilar moralities. Others like Ginwright (2007), Lee, Steinberg, Piquero and Knight (2011), Naughton (2013), and Silva Dias & Menezes (2013) elaborate that when emic cultures include law enforcement and young adult Black men, tensions arise quickly due to cultural misunderstandings.

Lawler (2014), inspired by the likes of George Mead and Erving Goffman, suggests that “attempts to understand identity [should be] as process, as something achieved rather than something innate, as done rather than ‘owned’” (p.5). For example, Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011) advise that “Ethnic identity development can play a role in youths’ perceptions and attitudes concerning police” (p.23). Additionally, their study provides evidence that Black adolescent males in low-income communities have a conditioned perception of police and expect adversarial interaction between the two ‘groups’. Concurrently, in terms of learning how to interact in adversarial situations, for example, their results also show that there is an association between young adults’ feelings of having a strong ethnic identity and “prosocial attitudes and greater well-being in multiple domains” (Lee, Steinberg, Piquero & Knight, 2011, p.33).

Similarly, Phinney, Jacoby & Silva (2007) suggest that adolescents who possess an identity, although in some phase of development, has a level of security and possess “positive intergroup attitudes and mature intercultural thinking” (p.478). As exhibited later in Chapter 4, the participants in this dissertation study exhibit these attributes as members of political clubs, for example. However, as is prominent in media

(Domonoske & Chappell, 2016; Kopplin & Miller, 2016; Healy, 2014; Fox, 2015; BBC, 2016), continual exposure to adversarial interaction between law enforcement and young adult Black men, including the participants in this study, point out significance of media in what they are exposed to. Lawler (2014) adds that such exposure contributes to the perceptual, as well as cognitive, developments of the participants (Lawler, 2014).

The participants also reflect upon socioeconomic and class references as thematically common to their respective perceptions of the political (Miller, 1980). Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, and Motyl (2016) suggest a link between the influence of an individual's social and economic ideology pertaining to perceptions of prejudice among dissimilar culturally ideological bents. Porter (2013) stipulates that these dissimilar beliefs and attitudes initiate conflict among dissimilar cultural members absent tolerant understanding. Specifically, when referencing cultural attributes including beliefs and attitudes associated with socioeconomic and class categorizations as determined by the individual/participant. Another commonly thematic perception among the participants suggest that there are intergenerational influences on their attitudes related to social and political beliefs as well.

Disenfranchising social practices as a sociohistoric social force.

Alexander (2012), Anderson (2014), Heitzeg (2015) and others (e.g. Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jacobson, 2015) argue that there are sociohistoric disconnects in understandings that have permeated societal norms and effect individual thought processes, perceptions, internalization, and behavior. Variations of racism including Jim Crow policies, practices and the white racial frame are representations of these sociohistoric disconnects that have perdured through policies and practices (Alexander,

2012; Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Heitzeg, 2015; Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jacobson, 2015; Lawler, 2014). At the most intimate level, moral convictions, as discussed earlier, affect individuals' cognitively through his thought processes and behaviors (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016; Porter, 2013; Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Wisneski, Lytle & Skitka, 2009).

Porter (2013) provides some depth to exemplify context to the influences that motivate adolescent behavior. She conducted a study that included answering the question, "What is the unique relation between moral identity and political identity and subtypes of civic action, i.e. political and nonpolitical, among young adults" (p.243)? Porter (2013) found that moral identity has a relationship to young adults' political identity and that the former could assist in predicting subsequent behaviors or actions. Each level of internalized societal contexts, including relationships between moral belief systems and political activism, the residues of racism, Jim Crow, and the white racial frame provide environments for the activism of one's culture (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Skitka, Liu, Yang, Chen, Liu, & Xu, 2012). Each internalized social context exemplifies points of cultural disconnects, between adolescent Black males and societal authority, that simultaneously engage the process that is political identity development (Feagin, 2014; Fields & Fields, 2014; Glaude, 2016; Miller, 1980).

Feagin (2010; 2014) explains that the white racial frame is an intergenerational social force. By intergenerational social force he means that this white racial frame, or frame, persists as a behavioral norm for the American social environment. And, as suggested previously, affect the identity developments and perceptions of disenfranchised community members (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Jacobson, 2015; Stewart, Winter,

Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015). The context of the frame is encountered through the perception of entities. Those behavioral norms manifest as physical artefacts and conceptual messages that in-turn trigger a choice to react to the frame as a normative belief (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Feagin, 2010; Feagin, 2014). Feagin and Copas (2008) and Feagin (2010; 2014) present that the frame was conceptualized and initiated in the late-1600s and integrated within the fabric of the new American Constitution as the “common sense” of this new society. This common-sense frame consisted, and consists, of the maintenance and perpetuation of the belief and expression of “racial stereotypes, racial narratives and interpretations, racial images and language accents, racialized emotions; and inclinations to discriminate” (Feagin, 2010, p.60) upon Black folks through the various societal institutions.

A review of the literature suggests that there is a gap in our knowledge and understanding of the process of young Black males’ experiences and perceptions of political activities (Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Contreras, Schirmer, Banaji, & Mitchell, 2013; Edwards, 2007). This substantive review of the literature, thus far, provides a case that there is not only a lack of knowledge of the perceptions of young adult Black men about political activism. The case is also revealing that because of a failure to study the experiences of young adult Black men in relation to their understanding of ‘the political’, we as a society maintain disenfranchising social contexts while also intensifying such disenfranchisement by excluding their voices from the political processes (Baron, Dunham, Banaji, & Carey, 2014; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). In this study, the participants’ reflections are the basis for increasing knowledge of knowledge about the cases that maintain and manifest political disenfranchisement for

the participants. By focusing on exploration based from these reflections, knowledge will be discovered and developed from their voices (Seidman, 2013).

Lawler (2014) argues for connections between perceptions and the identity development of individuals as a process. This distinction between perceptions and identities supports a need to seek knowledge of history and politics as it influences the creation of individual identity or identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Lawler, 2014; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson III, 2012). Lukes (2005) provides a dynamic link among the political, the psychological, and a relationship to identity development through a form of the social phenomenon of power. Lukes (2005) terms this form of social power three-dimensional power. This power manifests as a presentation of social norms by “securing of compliance to domination (by) ‘the powerful’” (pp.109-110). As reflected, there is a “securing of compliance” or compulsion for an individual to act, originated by “the powerful” as a mechanism to dominate individuals in society.

As represented through the statements of Feagin (2010; 2014) and others thus far in this substantive review of the literature (e.g. Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Feagin & Copas, 2008; Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Jacobson, 2015; Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015; Winfield, 2007), society consists of norms and influences that affect the perceptions of young adult Black men. There are three conceptually dimensioned areas that have presented themselves throughout this substantive review of the literature. Those areas of consideration for the theoretical review of the literature are: 1) social influences and developments of political identity and perceptions (Feagin, 2010; 2014; Lawler, 2014); 2) toward establishing an identity development process of young adult Black males the social norms and the identity development process of young adult

Black males (Heitzeg, 2015); and 3) decisions to act based from the prescriptively or proscriptively tolerated internalization of normative social standards and beliefs (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014). Overall, as suggested by Hughey and Byrd (2013), given a theoretical position gained upon review of content from these areas, a goal became consideration for “the role that interactional accountabilities and expectations of racial identity performance have to play as both product and cause of the racialized social order” (p.974) as presented by the participants’ respective reflections.

In the next section, the theoretical review of the literature will approach the hypothetically developed literature to consider these three areas as process. The next section shall also act as a context for the conceptual lens of this study which will assist in identifying the political identity development of the participants throughout this dissertation. Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl (2016) have formulated points-of-reference from which folks process tolerances of experiences based from perceptions of prejudice and injustices as disenfranchising phenomena. The theoretical review of the literature section will initiate through presentation of these points-of-reference for exploring the three dimensioned norms and influences as potential points of analysis that present themselves through the reflections of the participants.

A Theoretical Review of the Literature

As introduced in Chapter 1, what is “political” is explained as a process rather than a static political thing (Baron, Dunham, Banaji, & Carey, 2014; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014; Miller, 1980). And recalling that Miller argues that “the political” is “what (some phenomenon) does by applying some principles of signification (and thus) does not have a fixed reference” (p.57). Miller (1980) elaborates

that this process of “the political” consists of a state by which two folks, for example, understand a thing, what he calls “equivocals,” differently. For example, “the” omnipotent deity for one may be “called” Allah; but that same omnipotent deity for another is “called” God. The same omnipotent being, but because each understanding individual has come to comprehend that deity procures a degree of intolerance of the different beliefs, values, attitudes, etc. that are associated with those respective comprehensions (Deci & Flaste, 1992; Lawler, 2014; Strauss, 1992). Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers and Motyl (2016) conducted a study on outcomes of dissimilar others, for example folks of different cultures, and perceptions of prejudice as disenfranchising phenomena. The hypotheses argued suggest are indicative of the identity development of the participants within this study and dissertation.

Crawford and colleagues (2016) study sought distinct characteristics of dissimilarity among groups given the social and political dimensions of ideology and prejudices, as a tool for identifying the perceptions of disenfranchised folks. In other words, the authors expanded on previous studies presenting a continuum of beliefs across political ideologies. Their studies examined “three competing hypotheses of a multi-dimensional account of ideological prejudice” (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016, p.2). The three overarching hypotheses are the *dimension-specific symmetry hypothesis*, that predicts an economic orientation and economic perceived interaction, similar in size, to the social orientation (i.e. liberal or conservative) and social perceived interaction (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016).

Next, the *social primacy hypothesis* predicts that the social orientation and perceived social interaction, will be stronger than, the economic orientation and

perceived economic interaction (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016). And the *social-specific asymmetry hypothesis* “predicts that the Social Orientation [and] Perceived Social interaction will be a spreading interaction, such that social conservatives but not liberals express prejudice towards the ideologically dissimilar group” (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016, p.14). All these hypotheses predict a social orientation and social perceived interaction. These hypotheses take into consideration measures for both social and economic associations of individual belief systems and each gleaned a consistent level support except the social-specific asymmetry hypothesis.

Each hypothesis represents distinct context by which a representation of an individual’s perception of social prejudice is presented, and an indication as to the development of his political identity. “The dimension-specific symmetry hypothesis predicts that social and economic ideologies differentially predict prejudice against targets who are perceived to vary on the social and economic dimensions, respectively” (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016, p.2). The authors’ preparation for this study came to discover a multidimensional consideration for coming to predict levels of prejudice in individuals beyond merely a unidimensional perspective, or merely strong liberal inclination to, or from, conservative political ideology. In other words, to what degree does a participant be inclined to change perceived freedoms and equalities that had been experienced by him. Crawford and colleagues (2016) would explain a liberal participant as one who tends toward helping himself or others because of a perceived need for an “‘openness to change to conservation’ [i.e.to get to a place of being able to conserve a way of being] and ‘self-enhancement to self-transcendence’” (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016, p.6).

For the dimension-specific symmetry hypothesis, Crawford, and colleagues' (2016) study produced, moreover, evidence for levels of behavior as a product of an individual's attitude toward dissimilar belief systems pertaining to civic, political, and greater social worldviews. That behavior indicates that a person of dissimilar worldview or ideology would have interplay based from animosity as a conflict with his moral convictions. Wisneski, Lytle, and Skitka (2009) report that when moral conviction is involved, it is more difficult to resolve conflict immediately. However, in considering discrimination in conjunction with engagement of dissimilar worldviews, a person is shown to discriminate only based from perceived difference in socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status and assistance of others within the participants' of this dissertation's respective communities was primary in understanding "the political" through reflections upon moral conflicts, as suggested by Wisneski and colleagues (2009). The next hypothesis that is similar but make a distinction between the social and the economic perceptions of worldviews is the social primacy hypothesis.

Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, and Motyl (2016) explain that "The social primacy hypothesis predicts that such ideological worldview conflict is experienced more strongly along the social than economic dimension" (p.2). The social primacy hypothesis, then, suggests that social dissimilarities weighed more on a participants' perception of a dissimilar other than economic dissimilarity. And, the "social-specific asymmetry hypothesis predicts that social conservatives will be more prejudiced than social liberals, with no specific hypotheses for the economic dimension" (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016, p.2). Authors such as Burke and Stets (2009) and Lawler (2014) provide information to consider the ideological processes of the

participants' perceptions and the engagement of social and economic conditions.

Presentation and discussion given these reflections are developed in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, respectively.

Social influences and developments of political identity and perceptions.

Burke and Stets (2009) and Lawler (2014) suggest that how an individual comes to perceive social and economic conditions is related to the type of politics, i.e. from a conservative or liberal mindset, through which his identity development process at a point of experience syncs. Lawler (2014) contends that how a participant's process of understanding social and economic situations reveals a door into how he perceives and reacts to a given situation. Smith and Osborn (2004) add that, as a continual process, "attempts to explore/understand/make sense of the subjective meaning of events/experiences/states of the individual" (p.229) in his everyday life. Lakoff (2002) provides direction to that proverbial door while also providing a basis from which to establish a political mindset for the participant as products of making sense of experiences. This direction, moreover, includes explanation of a mechanism for determining his ideological position, i.e. conservative or liberal, and political development. More is said on this distinction in ideological perspective later in the chapter linked to what Lakoff (2002) calls moral politics.

Expanding the arguments of Burke and Stets (2009), Lawler (2014) links this phenomenon of subjectivation as continued direction toward understanding the perception and political identity development of folks. He suggests that each of the study participants, for example, through virtue of having an "identity" engages in forms of identity politics. For Lawler (2014) "to consider what identity politics might tell us about

identity and, specifically, what it might tell us about the political dimensions that are, I argue, part and parcel of processes of identity-formation” (p.162). His use of the phrase *identity politics* is understood as movements that are enacted because of social dissimilarities and prejudices aimed at a person because of his race, sexual orientation, class, etc. Burke and Stets (2009) would add a distinction if considering the perceptions of the participants given Lawler’s (2014) suggestion that identity means politics; politics means action; and action is a form of a movement in-part because “power is always accompanied by resistance” (Lawler, 2014, p.79).

Burke and Stets (2009) acknowledge an understanding of ‘identity’ consisting of socially categorized divisions, i.e. race, sexual orientation, class, etc. And each ‘social division’ effectively is an agent that plays into the actions of that participant. Collins and Bilge (2016) call this collective of social divisions *intersectionality*. Through explaining intersectionality, Collins and Bilge (2016) say that a person – or participant - is one who has many social divisions that may make-up a participant’s identity. They represent the categories of social division “race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.7).

Picariello (2015) advises that these identities are a product of both individual and socially collective constructs. Lawler (2014) would concur in that those constructs are products of normalization of identities as a form of governmental management and the prior mechanisms of reinforcement in identity development. Collins and Bilge (2016) provide six frameworks that act as core ideas of intersectionality as an analytic tool of individual perceptions of ‘the political’ of social experiences. Those frameworks are: “social inequality; relationality; power; social context; complexity; and social justice”

(p.25). Yanow and Ybema (2009) suggest that these frameworks, and its related contexts and contents, exemplify the entry into understanding how a participant engages in the process of subjective meaning making. The related contexts and contents of social phenomena exemplified by Collins and Bilge (2016) are what Yanow and Ybema (2009) call social artefacts. Additionally, Yanow and Ybema (2009) advise that “what you see depends on where you stand: perspective is all when it comes to knowing and knowledge” (p.39).

Crocetti, Jahromi, and Meeus (2012) suggest that analysis of frameworks such as these provide insight into ‘the identity’ and civic engagement of the participants in two ways. The two ways that these frameworks advise are that, first, when a participant has accepted an identity category after experiencing some moral conflict, they were “more involved in volunteer activities, reported higher civic efficacy, and stronger aspirations to contribute to their communities than their diffused counterparts [and], the link between identity processes and past and future volunteer and political participation was mediated by social responsibility” (p.521). Lakoff (2002), as presented earlier in this section, would associate positions of social responsibility as a reflection of the participants’ moral politics. As detailed further in chapter 4, volunteering, for example, was self-reported consistently among this dissertation’s study participants. Going forward, this review will integrate the content thus far with the theoretical literature. The product will be a framework toward development of a working theory for evidencing a basis for establishing a point of political identity development for each study participant.

Toward establishing an identity development process of young adult Black males.

There are inward and outward indicators for how a participant may be perceiving, processing understanding, and behaving in response to a social experience. Identity development is a well-documented basis for how a participant engages this process (Bynner, Romney, & Emler, 2003; Duncan & McCoy, 2007; Erickson, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2017). As far as how a participant may be perceiving a social experience inwardly, Ryan and Deci (2017) through their heavily researched Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provide guardrails within which analysis of a dynamic relationship between individual interests and identity development may be engaged. Through SDT, Ryan and Deci (2017) propose that “people develop identities in an attempt to satisfy their needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy (and) the degree to which they experience need satisfaction while forming identities (as a) dynamic and fluid” (p.385) process. Generally, identity formation is a dynamic part of reciprocal contribution to a basic psychological need of “discovery and intrinsic interests” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.388).

Outward indicators for how a participant may be perceiving, processing understanding, and behaving in response to a social experience is also well-documented (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016; Feagin, 2014; Heitzeg, 2015; Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jackson III, 2012; Lakoff, 2002; Lawler, 2014). In Chapter 4, there are four areas that provided outward indicators as points from which reflection was evaluated for how a participant may be perceiving social experiences in terms of the ‘political’. The four areas from which these indicators were mined included:

1) The participants' indicated position of moral politics. As introduced earlier, the participants' position on a liberal-conservative continuum will be sought through his reflections as a consideration for the nature of assistance he believes others should be provided (Lakoff, 2002; Seidman, 2013).

2) Political perspective and the relative importance of social orientation and economic orientation of reflected experiences. For an evaluative position in this area, the reflections of the participants will be reviewed for the nature of their responses related to community and culture (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers & Motyl, 2016; Seidman, 2013). Additionally, the product of those reflections will be conjoined with the social-economic hypotheses criteria provided by Crawford, Brandt, and colleagues (2016) as an indicator for the participants' position on this continuum as well.

3) Characteristics of identity development. Using characteristics that make-up the respective stages of Black Identity Development Theory will be indicators for the various references to the social divisions of intersectionality (e.g. race, class, etc.), self-identified by the participants, as a framework for establishing a political identity development system.

4) Evidences of prescriptive and proscriptive internalization of social norms. For this area, each participant's reflections will be considered for the nature of references to social conditions, especially in relation to their self-identified social divisions.

The exchanges with each participant in this study produced a self-identification of himself through reflection as a young Black man in association with an economic class. Lawler (2014) would call this self-identification as evidence for what he calls *subjectivation*. Subjectivation implies that a person is a 'subject' who is either perceived

by someone else or exemplifies himself as a representation of his identity. He associates this phenomenon as a form of power, political, and evidence of a social form of management through mechanisms of government and exposures to media. The various mechanisms are presented and discussed in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation but are distributed constantly by “the educational, public welfare, (and) the minutiae of daily life” (Lawler, 2014, p.78) and reinforced “through narratives, through kin networks, through unconscious processes, through governance and interpellation, (and) through hidden and overt forms of identity politics” (Lawler, 2014, p.180).

Ryan and Deci (2017) argue that social and economic systems are linked to what they call “psychological horizons (as the) very possibilities that persons within them can envision” (p.562) of folks. Moreover, the participants’ respective identity formations and satisfaction of basic psychological needs is related to the extent to which he internalizes “pervasive cultural contexts” (p.561) from those social and economic systems. Ryan and Deci (2017) include that these pervasive contexts are embedded within, for example, “religious identifications, political structures, and economic systems within which proximal social contexts are considered and occur” (p.562).

Denzin (1992) links an interplay between a participant and objects or agents of society as a process of internalization through what he calls a dialectic. Said another way, this process of internalization through the dialectic consists of several interacting components: the individual (e.g. the study participant with police officers or teachers), the social structure, and the interaction between the young adult Black male and the individual representative of the social environment or social structure. Social and economic (socioeconomic) references and determinations in the participants’ respective

reflections was exhibited in this study. That said, Diemer and Li (2011) include in their arguments that “(youth) who experience socioeconomic or racialized forms of domination and marginalization” (Diemer & Li, 2011; p.1815) include an emotional perspective that cracks a door in thinking about civic and political processes.

Ryan and Deci (2017) advise that emotional response is linked to a level of satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which are indicative of identity formation. Diemer and Li (2011) argue that for young Black males, these interactions manifest through feelings (emotions or affective reasoning) and moral convictions (consideration of beliefs and values or cognitive reasoning) in the context of disenfranchising phenomena or pervasive contexts. Both feelings and moral equivocations related to political reflections, both social and economic, were exhibited through the exchanges with the study participants.

As presented, a component of the dialectic is social structure (Denzin, 1992). The social structure component consists of the institutions, practices, policies, and or events given the points of interaction with the individual (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Searle, 1995; Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Wang, Wu, Kinshuk & Spector, 2013). Within the study, each participant reflects directly to incidents of racial pervasiveness through their eyes (see Chapters 4 and 5). Oppressive practices, policies, and or events, as pervasive contexts of social and economic systems, are exemplified as dynamic mechanisms of systemic racism (Crawford, Brandt, Inbar & et.al, 2016; Jacobson, 2015). Feagin (2010) provides six mechanisms of systemic racism, including:

- 1) the patterns of unjust impoverishment and unjust enrichment and their transmission over time; 2) the resulting vested group interests and the alienating racist relations; 3) the costs and burdens of racism; 4) the

important role of white elites; 5) the rationalization of racial oppression in a white-racist framing; and 6) the continuing resistance of racism. (p.10)

As presented earlier through the arguments of Scott (1990) and bases for participant resistance, the conceptions of unjust impoverishment and unjust enrichment reinforce materialization as a reoccurring catalyst for folks on all sides of conflicting cultures. And again, socioeconomics reoccurs for each study participant in their reflections. However, Freire (2003), for example, suggests that material is not the only catalyst for resistance and internalization. Ryan and Deci (2017) speak to this potential for participant perspective when stating that “all cultures, (contain) pervasive influences that shape the dynamics of proximal environments, resulting in practices that tend to enhance or diminish the need satisfactions of their constituents” (p.563). Moreover, they add that judgment of legitimacy of an engaged practice weighs heavily on its pervasiveness to the participant.

Freire (2003) advises that oppression is a mechanism by which the disposition of a Black young adult is controlled and removed from his natural creative capacities, like acting autonomously, to a disposition of being a ‘receiving object’. In fact, feeling of autonomous action is necessary in positive identity development and behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Jacobson (2015) present Hip-Hop as a form of creativity of resistant expression through what has been called culture of poverty theory. Roach and Gursslin (1967) also argue that culture of poverty theory conveys an association to cultural inferiority to the culture of normative society. And then there is the component of the interaction between an individual and “the social structure” as dialectic (Denzin, 1992).

Authors have included in their works that the public-school classroom reflects pervasive contexts that are proximal residue of legislative policy, that culminates in educational environments that do not sufficiently engage marginalized youth for basic psychological needs (Edwards, 2007; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Naughton, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The study's participants expressed participation in extra-curricular activities related to political engagement in either high school or college, however, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. However, Fields and Fields (2014), Feagin and Ducey (2019), and others (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Manning, 2014; Hobolt, Tilley & Wittrock, 2013) exemplify the shortage of these opportunities and the benefits thereof in public education as a standard part of pedagogy.

Literature on the political identity development of students seeks to speak of characteristics through which sociological and psychological processes influence individual perceptions (Cohen, 2010, Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Ginwright, 2010; Kirshner, 2015; Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010) and identity formation (Lawler, 2014; Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010; Ryan and Deci, 2017). Moreover, the responses of the participants will serve as the pool of information from which meaning, and pieces of knowledge shall be drawn. These meanings will in-turn serve to produce identifiers of participant identity and perceptions (Denzin, 1992; Porter, 2013; Wijeyesinghe and Jackson III, 2012).

As may be recalled, Collins and Bilge (2016) explain intersectionality as the categories of social divisions (identities) of a person potentially being “race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age” (p.7). Ryan and Deci (2017) add that “satisfaction of basic psychological needs was in general positive related

to more fully committing to particular identities and to enhanced breadth and depth of identity formations” (p.388). The participants in this dissertation study are young adult Black men. A complementary-purpose and conceptual lens for this dissertation is to identify indicators of the ‘identities’ of the participants as presented through their reflections. To transition into an understanding of the idea of a person having ‘multiple identities’ and the commonality of the participants being self-identified as Black, this review will look at treatments of one identity, race.

Influenced by works of Helms (1990; 1995), Thompson and Carter (1997a) define racial identity as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (p.2). As other authors have argued (Jackson III, 2012; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011; Thompson & Carter, 1997a; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith & et.al, 2001; Vedantam, 2010), feelings like these are products of exposure to other messages of social normalcy in society that are indicative of forms of resistance and identity distinction (Lawler, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011), exemplify resistance in direct evidence through arguing “that Black youth recognize the ‘criminal’ stigma associated with their group and have come to expect negative police behavior” (p.23). While Vedantam (2010) finds that the actions of folks are predominantly due to acting upon social environments and artefacts that unconsciously condition folks.

Erickson (1994) would assign this ideology or position of understanding as “the social institution which is the guardian of identity” (p.133). Erikson (1994) uses the term ideology as a norm for being the “best” person according to societal institution. In-fact, with the belief that to “make it” in this world one should be aligned with what is

understood as the institutional roles and culture of White folks. Authors convey that indication of such efforts is exemplified through the participants' seeking companionship with White folks and avoiding Black folks (Heitzeg, 2015; Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jacobson, 2015). Jackson III (2012) conveyed this conception in stating that "White is right" (p.42). Arguably, exposure to patterns of events such as the killing of young Black men by law enforcement, or, the treatment of Black folks during Hurricane Katrina exemplify the existence and reinforcement of a "white is right" social construct. Ryan and Deci (2017) would say that perceptions such as these by the participants exemplify narratives that contribute and maintain pervasive and proximal cultural contexts. The frequency of events such as these tend to trouble Black folks (Duncan, 2005; Duncan & McCoy, 2007; Stepick & Stepick, 2002; Jackson III, 2012).

Jackson III (2012) identifies such conflicts experienced by young adult Black men as an example of identity development as one who progressively comes to understand the racist phenomena and manifestations engrained in the societal experience as a restraint to his advancement of self-interests. Jackson III (2012) argues that the extent to which racism permeates experience and the artefacts representative of this association "at the individual and institutional, conscious, and unconscious, intentional and unintentional, attitudinal, behavioral, and policy levels" (p.43). A participant exhibiting elements of this stage may convey angry feelings and disposition when faced with racist artefacts and experiences. Moreover, the participant would actively seek and engage in ceasing their victimization (Brave & Sylva, 2007; Scott, 1990; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, et.al, 2001).

Scott (1990) presents and argues for what he calls *infrapolitics* and a *hidden transcript*. The nature of these conceptions is exemplified as responses by oppressed

folks against manifestations of domination as power. Infrapolitics is argued as the provision of “much of the cultural and structural underpinnings of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused” (p.184). And the hidden transcript is characterized as the “discourse that takes place ‘off stage’, beyond direct observation by powerholders” (p.4). Ryan and Deci (2017) would also classify infrapolitics and the hidden transcripts as examples of proximal contexts to identity formation. Scott (1990) would explain that “the relationship between dominant elites and subordinates (is) very much of a material struggle in which both sides are continually probing for weaknesses and exploring small advantages” (p.184), as the basis for the exhibition of power by the dominant and the basis for resistance by the oppressed.

There are several sociohistorically socially oppressive policies and practices that are recorded in the literature (Alexander, 2012; Fields & Fields, 2014; Jackson III, 2012; Winfield, 2007). Such conflicting policies and practices such Jim Crow and eugenics give way to societal narratives that exemplify potential points of knowledge for the study’s participants. Reflections evidencing several sociohistorical referent conceptions in context of racial classification emerge during exchanges with the participants of this study.

Sociological phenomena exist as conceptual mechanisms by which meaning, and representation adheres to social artefacts, such as those that present as policies and practices, through time (Alexander, 2012; Fields & Fields, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Winfield, 2007). Alexander (2012) presents social policies today that exemplify the existence of the effects of Jim Crow policies. She suggests that “In each generation, new tactics have been used for achieving the same goals - goals shared by the Founding

Fathers” (p.1). Alexander (2012) reinforces a case for the current social state and narratives of mass and unequal incarceration of Black and brown men. Her argument adds that such narratives convey a resemblance to the effects of slavery on Black folks. In terms of identity development, again, Ryan and Deci (2017) would exacerbate effects of proximally pervasive contexts upon the identity developments of those affected.

Fields and Fields (2014) alert us to more proximal ways in which the effects of Jim Crow have perdured as social phenomena with various social artefacts as mechanisms. They illuminate how we, as a function of forming identity and perceiving artefacts, tend to “[examine and] rank with respect to each other [by requiring] examination” (p.84) upon encountering another individual. Stereotypical artefacts of Jim Crow policy and practice when encountering a Black man, for example, “rank” the stereotyping individual in a position by which “she/he” is more important than “that person” being stereotyped. Black men in jail, as a sociohistorical artefact, is an excellent example of an artefact that is used to rank and produce our identities.

Winfield (2007) characterizes the social phenomenon of Eugenics as an ideology. This ideology is an American product aimed to permanently “rank” folks toward improving American “stock” (Fields & Fields, 2007). Per Winfield (2007), “Eugenic ideology relied on the premise that human worth was the function of a hierarchical system based, in part, on race and class” (p.5). Relevant yet today is a resurgence of broadcast narratives of White nationalism by representatives in our government (Kelly, 2019). Lawler (2014) presenting roles of government as influences on identity formation explains that

...modern Western forms of government increasingly operate on the basis of managing populations rather than punishing them; the demand is for

‘normality’ rather than obedience of a sovereign power. Hence ‘techniques of normalization’ have become the preferred means of government. (p.77)

Lawler (2014) includes that mechanisms such as narratives convey these conceptions of government with an aim of “classification and categorization” (p.77) of the citizenry. He calls such aims and mechanisms the system of governmentality. The influence of eugenics has perdured due to the remaining presence of ideological artefacts that exist such as “nationalism, ‘reform oriented’ liberalism, out-and-out homophobia, white supremacy, misogyny, and racism” as promoted through media, social media, etc. (Winfield, 2007, p.161). With this representation for evidence of perduring contextual influences upon identity formation through time, a latter portion of Black identity development for Jackson III (2012) is identified as internalization.

For Jackson III, internalization “occurs when an individual begins to apply or to integrate some of the newly defined aspects of Black culture” (p.45). However, he accepts and argues for the conception and nature of intersectionality as integral to a participant’s “application and integration of his social divisions” as represented by Collins and Bilge (2016) earlier in this chapter. Picariello (2015) adds to an understanding of the process of intersectionality and identity development. She adds a dynamic aspect of these social divisions within a participant, both, contribute to his identity, and, each of those social divisions are products of both individual and socially collective contexts. Ryan and Deci (2017) would then advise that his identity development depends on the nature of the facilitation of each of a participants’ social divisions in self-discovery as contributors to his overall basic psychological needs. Collins and Bilge (2016) would advocate for this understanding as an analytic tool through which the participants come to perceive the political world. In terms of cultural

difference, for example, contexts such as Eurocentric juxtaposed to the protestant based ideological principles may present through sociological norms that conflict with a young Black man's facilitation of self-discovery and basic psychological needs concerning "social inequality; relationality; power; social context; complexity; and social justice" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.25).

In terms of psychological development involving processes of internalization, specifically, Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that "it is not necessary for persons to progress through each stage of internalization for each behavior in order for that regulation to become integrated" (p.199). Consider the conceptual representations as characteristics for each social division as a part of identifying political identity development for each participant. This specific process is spoken of in terms of identity politics in a manner that adds a pragmatic perspective when considering identity formation (Crenshaw, 1991; Lawler, 2014).

Lawler (2014) finds that the literature makes a distinction between conventional politics (p.161) and identity politics (p.163). In sum, although applied in terms of 'the political' among folks, there is a perceived application among the social divisions of a participants' identity development process (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Conventional politics represent a social order whereby the state, or polis, acts on behalf of its citizenry who are each viewed equally. When power relations are revealed, however, the inequalities among citizens initiates the tensions of identity politics. Crenshaw (1991) in her important study of identity politics and intersectionality suggests that "difference" among folks could be a source of power for non-majority populations. Lawler (2014) states, "once we investigate power relations in which [processes of

identity-formation] are forged, identity politics are much more pervasive than conventional definitions will allow” (p.162). Identity politics are pervasive in that it represents the many characteristics that a person potentially engenders at a given point in time (Breakwell, 2004; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Waterman, 1982).

Authors have included in their works the pervasive and proximal cultural contexts of what is referred to as the *white racial frame* (Feagin, 2010). The white racial frame speaks to the existence of societal behavioral norms that are culturally and morally inconsistent among communities of differing ethnicity and race (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015). These society-based behavioral norms are based from false beliefs that white folks are intellectually and biologically superior to Black folks (Feagin, 2010; Winfield, 2007). And this frame has been maintained through policies and practices throughout American history (Feagin & Ducey, 2019). Internalization of contexts related to the white racial frame would be considered what is referred to as a prescribed course of behavior (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Heiphetz, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). Authors including Feagin and Cobas’ (2008) and Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) provide content ascribing examples of both prescribed (non-acceptance of) and proscribed (acceptance of) pervasive cultural contexts and norms as influences on the behavior of Black folks. Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014), however, the potential for resistance to the process of prescription/proscription as well.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) and others (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Deci & Flaste, 1992) provide deeper understanding from which to apply the conception of the dialectic. The dialect as a process of internalization includes the phenomenon of

perceiving social contexts. For these authors, no socially presented context is necessarily “interesting” to an individual, but, all social contexts are internalized, to some degree, either through introjection or integration. An introjected internalization is a social structure that is “done to” the individual, such as disenfranchisement, discrimination, or having to conform to certain normative beliefs and practices of society, for example (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Social contexts that motivate an individual to act influence the participants, through introjection or integration, in proportion to the extent to which he feels that he can act autonomously. Consequently, Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasize the importance of autonomy in the process of identity formation. Secondly, the relevancy of social structures depends upon his lived experiences. And lastly, the participants’ feelings of competence when interacting with the social structure. Deci and Ryan (1985) refer to each of these conditions as propositions for what they call cognitive evaluation theory to evaluate individual self-determination and intrinsic motivation.

To the contrary of the premises of internalization and various conclusions that young adults are apathetic to things political, there is much interest (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994; Wood, 2014). Interest, however, could be either an integrated internalization of social structures or an introjection of social structures. The matter then depends upon the process of the internalization. Was the internalization something that the individual could reconcile with their existing propositions (integrate) or interested because of the level of disagreement (introjected) with the social structure that’s being internalized. Feelings are clearly important to the internalization of social structures. Authors speak to a link between feelings of powerlessness and marginalization,

adolescent perception, and reacting to an internalization of some social structure (Checkoway, 2013; Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Diemer & Li, 2011).

Hibbing, Smith, and Alford (2014) speak to determining a working approach toward identifying characteristics of individuals' predisposition as social contexts are internalized. Additionally, they identify a process that takes on a bias of perception, characteristics on a continuum of likelihood by which an individual internalizes, and, a depth of internalization by an individual. As they found "Negativity bias is the principle that 'negative events are more salient, potent, dominant in combinations, and generally efficacious than positive events'" (Hibbing, Smith & Alford, 2014, p.303). Social contexts that are perceived as negative by an individual have been found to be priority awareness to that individual among all social contexts (Bartlett, 2009; Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; King & McInerney, 2014). Negative biases, for example, are dialectically produced contexts via an individual's perceptions of what have come to be understood as oppressive discrimination or systemic racism (Hughey & Byrd, 2013; Jacobson, 2015). These contexts may include practices, policies, and or events as proximal manifestations of the environment (Denzin, 1992; Grissom, 2014). And therefore, implied to be important indicators for how a young adult Black man may be perceiving given social contexts, including matters political.

Research questions.

Given the content of this literature review, the thesis for this study is that perceptions of young adult Black men is a dynamic process in relation to his identity formation and development. Toward gaining knowledge of these perceptions, one should seek his reflections upon his understanding of 'the political'. Specifically,

representations of his understanding as a function of helping others; relationship with his community; and the social and economic contexts in which he and his community share identities. Overall, the goals for the participant and his community is their respective achievements of basic psychological needs. The research questions for this study are:

- a) How do young adult Black males perceive, or view, political activation?
- b) How have these views changed over their respective lifetimes?
- c) What are the primary social influences on these views of political activation?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation has a dimensioned goal. The first dimension is toward gaining knowledge of eighteen to twenty-two-year-old young adult Black males' perceptions of civic and political activation. And the second dimension is aimed toward gaining knowledge of the political identity development of these young men (Porter, 2013). Knowledge of these dimensions will be drawn from the emergent reflections and responses of interviews of three young adult Black men: Acey, Jason, and Nelson. Acey is a twenty-one-year-old and going into his senior year in college in the south-central region of the United States. Acey grew up in that same region attending a private pre-kindergarten school, and public suburban schools through high school. Jason is also a twenty-one-year-old, going into his senior year of college, in the south-central region of the United States. Jason also grew up in the south-central region of the United States attending public schools. And Nelson is an eighteen-year-old senior attending a public high school in the Midwest.

The responses from these young men serve as insights toward providing an understanding of their experiences in relation to the three research questions. Overall, the study sought to gain knowledge of the perceptions of civic activism by young adult Black men in relationship to political activism. The literature advises that there are three broad components of the process for identity development, including, *society* (Erikson, 1967; Renn, 2012), *culture* (Renn, 2012), and *perceptions* (Smith & Osborn, 2004) given individuals' lived experiences (Lawler, 2014; Peck, Brodish, Malanchuk, Banerjee & Eccles, 2014; Sullivan & Ghara, 2015). The method, conceptual direction, and data

development was structured to gain knowledge of these components directly from the perspectives of each of the participants.

The Study Design

Given the questions proposed and the nature of those questions, the design for this study engaged the nature of an interpretative case study (ICS) structure. The ICS enabled an examination of both psychological and sociological artefacts and phenomena given the reflections of the participants. An ICS also allows for the analysis of these artefacts in relation to individual identities, experiences, and perceptions. To engage the ICS structure, the study design for this dissertation adopted *symbolic interactionism* (SI) as its tool. Denzin (1992) explains that “Symbolic interaction (the merger of self and social interaction) is the chief means ‘by which human beings are able to form social or joint acts’” (p.25). Influenced by Barnes (1956), Denzin (1992) narrowed his professional foci to the relationships between individual actions as a member of a group. In doing so he advises that a characteristic of SI an individual “gives up the role of spectator and voluntarily commits his [her] freedom to the cause” (p.162). It is the gaining insight into this process, the “merger between self and social interaction” from the perspectives of the participants that is a focus of this study. More detail will be provided of SI, the tool, but first more needs to be disclosed of ICS, the process.

Study Paradigm: Interpretivism

As presented in the last section, ICS is the study design which makes *interpretivism* the paradigm for the study (Denzin, 1992; Yanow & Ybema, 2009). Interpretivism is selected because it requires that the knowledge gained is from the perspectives of each participant, consideration of their identities, and their interactions

with social artefacts (i.e. social phenomena). As Yanow and Ybema (2009) would explain, interpretivism will be the pair of glasses through which phenomena are seen by an individual. Said yet another way, interpretivism will require and allow a focus on the social artefacts or phenomena that contribute to each participant's meaning-making process, exclusively, through their reflections.

Yanow and Ybema (2009) exemplify social artefacts or phenomena as “acts, physical objects, and/or texts, treating them as the embodiments and vehicles for the expression of human meaning (while processing the) everyday, commonsensical values, beliefs, and/or feelings/sentiments that comprise the meanings” (p.40), therein. And while “(focusing) on accounting for processes of sensemaking and the role therein of intersubjectivity, lived experience, and prior knowledge” (p.40). For this study, and to engage the focusing processes of interpretivism, consider interpretivism as a pair of bifocal glasses. The general prescription is *symbolic interactionism* (Burke & Stets, 2009; Denzin, 1992; Stryker, 2003), and the bifocal portion is *interpretative phenomenological analysis*. An explanation for “the general prescription” of symbolic interactionism will be provided next, and thereafter “the bifocal” of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism was selected as the mechanism through which I as the researcher explores how the participants come to be aware of social phenomena. From the tradition of interpretivist procedures, Burke and Stets (2009) speak substantially to the nature and approach of symbolic interactionism (SI). Through their work, they present a process for critically exploring sociohistoric phenomena engaged by folks.

Moreover, this exploration allows for an identification of biproducts of lived experiences and individual identities. Influenced by symbolic interactionists such as Stryker (2003), Burke and Stets (2009) provide guideposts within SI to both identify artefacts of the functions of one's identity, and, to components of identity. An introduction of both functions and components shall be presented including brief explanations for each as a basis for understanding.

Burke and Stets (2009) explain that identity exhibits four functions. Moreover, the four functions of identity consist of two processes and two levels, whereas each is respectively a phenomenon. These functions have the purpose of being a control system for how a participant is engaging phenomena. The two processes are represented as either cognitive or emotional, or affective, in nature. The levels are either representative of a conscious or unconscious phenomenon in nature. Cognitive functions are exemplified by tasks such as decision-making as phenomena are being perceived. Whereas emotional or affective functions are engaged when phenomena perceived to be related to human agency are presented. However, identities engage these processes either deliberately or as a function of nondeliberate influences (Vedantam, 2010; Winfield, 2007).

The components of identity (i.e. components of a participant's identity) are fourfold and categorized as either inputs, identity standards, comparators, and outputs. Like phenomena of identity functions, each identity component is an phenomenon as well. Each component is an objective phenomenon to look for within the data of the participants' respective responses. The inputs are representatives of lived experiences

that are perceived identity functions (Burke and Stets, 2009). The process of perceiving is continuous. A comparator is the next identifiable phenomenon within this process.

A comparator is the part of this identity process at which the identity standard, or perceptions of meaning, are relevant to the individual identity and the meaning of each associated memory. Burke and Stets (2009) add that the comparator is, as a function of the identity standard portion of the perceiving process, the point at which what they call an error signal. The error signal is the difference between the input and the identity standard for the individual. In other words, error signals are identifiable by a change in behavior to the observer of the individual adjusting to the error signal. For example, Burke and Stets (2009) explain an error signal in terms of a young man behaving a certain way. That way of behaving produces an error signal in his mind is “a ruler for measuring (a young man’s) standard for himself (behaving) as a male.” The young man says to himself “uh oh I’m not acting the way I should and adjusts that behavior more like a male. And the output is the adjustment in behavior. Examples of “outputs” are exemplified in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 when content and discussions about participants’ intolerances, resistance, conflict with moral conviction is presented. Given the importance of these ideas of functions and components of identity, there is another way of presentation that is relevant here.

So, said another way, the components of identity are based from the conceptualization of identity as a system. And the components are the cogs that make up the processes of the system of identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). As stated previously, the four components of the identity system are: inputs; input standards; comparators; and outputs (Burke & Stets, 2009). Inputs, firstly, are the perceptions that an individual has

upon being exposed to phenomena and phenomena around him. My understanding of the literature on these components are like a thermostat by which folks draw from their respective perceptions. An input standard is an established set of meanings triggered by a perceived input. They add that input standards may be seen a definition of character. The next component is the comparator.

Keeping with the thermostat metaphor, the comparator is the temperature reading (Burke & Stets, 2009). The comparison associates to the behavior that the individual commits based upon the “measurement” of the comparator. The measurement is an indication to the individual how much he is or is not behaving, or will or will not behave, given his perception. This measurement is called the error signal (Burke & Stets, 2009). If he perceives that he is behaving according to his standard, then the measure would be “0.” And if he is behaving positively or negatively to some degree, the measure is “+” or “-” “1, 2, 3, etc.” accordingly. And the outputs would simply be the behavior presented by the individual (Burke & Stets, 2009).

The bifocal part of the lens (i.e. interpretative phenomenological analysis) of SI is a system of analysis that is based from the identification and evaluation of social and psychological phenomena. These phenomena make up all that is perceivable or conceivable by the participants’ experiences. These experiences, moreover, are represented, or symbolized, by “objects, actions, and events” (Winfield, 2007, p.43). SI will be used as a framework by which the phenomena of society, culture, and identity will be analyzed as an indicator of the participating young adults’ respective perceptions.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the “bifocal” or conceptual framework for this dissertation study. Like the bifocal portion of glasses, it enables a person to see stuff close-up and more clearly. IPA is an approach that will enable the identification of psychological phenomena, or psychological phenomena, of this dissertations inquiry. Moreover, IPA is a complement to SI which provides guidance for analyzing social phenomena, or social phenomena. Just as IPA is aimed toward the psychological aspects of the study analysis, SI is aimed toward the societal action or political side of the individual processes of social interaction. Additionally, IPA allows for an examination of individual lived experiences and the influencing perceptions thereof, given exposure to societal phenomena or phenomena. Smith and Osborn (2004) provide an introductory understanding for IPA through stating that

The aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study (are) the meanings’ experience(s), events, (and the) states held for participants. The approach is phenomenological (in) that it involves detailed examination of the participant’s lifeworld; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself. (p.53)

Smith, Flowers, and Larkins (2012) elaborate upon the nature of IPA as a philosophically based, qualitative approach toward identifying the “making sense” and “perceptions of” lived experiences by the participants. Moreover, IPA is a relevant study paradigm for the execution of SI because of its concern with the participants’ “personal perception or account or an object or event” (Smith, 2007, p.53). Jackson III (2012) provide both ontological and epistemological characteristics that are indicative of the participant’s culture, identity development, and the perceptions of phenomena. And

overall, these characteristics speak to an axiological, or worth and value, relationship that contributes to the make-up of each participant's identity as well (Creswell, 2003; Mertens, 2009).

Methods and Procedures

The methods and procedures for executing the study consisted of five major activities: participant selection; data collection; data analysis; quality assurance techniques; researcher positionality; and limitations (Creswell, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). Upon addressing each of these activities, there will be applicable detail of the study process itself.

Participant selection.

The selection of the participants was purposive and consisted of three young adult Black males (Creswell, 2008). In being purposive in selecting the participants, certain criteria were solicited of them. In this case, the participants have some level of interest in "politics." Moreover, the participants were not selected by me directly. Rather, the three participants were recruited by a fellow doctoral candidate and my daughter, respectively.

As advised earlier, there were three participants for this study. Two were twenty-one-year-old college students at historically Black universities in the southeastern urban public United States. The remaining participant was an eighteen-year-old senior in a midwestern urban high school. The twenty-one-year old young men were referred by my daughter and the remaining young man was referred by a fellow doctoral candidate. Each referrer was asked to recommend young adult Black males between the ages of 18 and 22 with some level of interest in political issues. No explanation or definition for the term "political" was provided to the referrers. And the participants were the first three

recommended between the two referrers. The selection of these participants provides an opportunity to reveal the potential variety of individual perceptions for civic and political activism (Bullock, 2010; de los Rios, Lopez & Morrell, 2015; Finlay, 2015).

Data collection.

Next, the data collection must exercise activities that allow perceptions to be revealed for how the participant gains knowledge toward civic and political activism (Creswell, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2004). Data for the study was collected through individual interviews. Moreover, by employing a semi-structured methodology, a thicker hermeneutic understanding and description of the conversations is possible. These understandings and description were drawn, first, from each participants' response. From here, an analysis toward synthesizing themes among the responses were drawn (Seidman, 2013; Warren & Karner, 2005). To elaborate, the individual interviews were conducted toward discerning their respective perceptions of presented social phenomena' representation in relation to civic activism (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sullivan & Ghara, 2015). Moreover, these phenomena will be used to seek evidence of lived experiences and perception that reference characteristics of the respective participants' degree of civic activism (Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Cutler, 2015; Fox & et.al, 2010; Levinson, 2010). An expression for the process of interviewing the participants follows with an aim toward gaining understanding of the participants' perspectives of civics and politics. The scope of these perspectives will be a qualitative perspective of the extent to which the participants have internalized social and economic contexts given his reflections (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and, the ideological position –

conservative or liberal - from which the participant tends to engage ‘the political’ (Lakoff, 2002; Miller, 1980).

A series of interviews of each participant will be the source of data collection for the study portion of this dissertation (Charmaz, 2004; Warren & Karner, 2005). The series of interviews consisted of an initial phone interview; a second phone interview; and a request to answer questions via email. The overall goal is to engage the participant in the reconstruction of his lived experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012) to present a focused life history when making meaning of political activism. The focused life history is a product of the participant’s experience subject to civic and political activism from as much context as possible. Context is highly important to the process of discovering a phenomenological interpretation of the participant’s perceptions of phenomena (Seidman, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2004, 2007). The structure of that first interview aimed to gain knowledge in three areas, represented through each research question presented at the conclusion of Chapter 2. At this point, I shall explain the three areas of the first interview, and their respective relationships to each of the three research questions, as the qualitative framework for the interviews (Seidman, 2013).

The first area of the interviews was to determine contexts for the participants’ respective political identity development through an exploration of his childhood and those lived experiences (Seidman, 2013). The first research question aimed to have the participant recall their early family lives to begin to form basis toward making meaning of political activism, and civic activism, as the interview progressed (Seidman, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012).

Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) suggest that how a participant perceives and comes to frame social norms reflects either what they refer to as the philosophers' perspective or the social science perspective. Given their categorization and perspective, the goal of all questions sought to observe whether the context exposes "Beliefs, expectations, group knowledge and common knowledge [that have] become central concepts in the development of a [personal] philosophical view of social norms" (p.1). The statement suggests that gaining knowledge of a participant's perceptions of social phenomena, social order, or social rules can be revealed through his discussion of beliefs or expectations of some social norm. For Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) an individual's beliefs and expectations of social norms present a distinction as to whether the social norm is distinct from his "conventions and descriptive norms" (p.1). Overall, the analysis will include whether there is an indication of some level of reconciliation with his cultural components.

The second area of the interviews aimed to reveal "concrete details of the participants' present lived experience" (Seidman, 2013, p.21). Seidman (2013) calls this seeking to secure the participants' details of experience. Additionally, this second area of the interview sought information to explore the participants' present-day behaviors when engaged with civic or political phenomena (Seidman, 2013). As applicable, the follow-up questions sought to identify characteristics of political identity development. As Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill (2014) would have interest in, this exploration would seek whether the participants seemed to speak in terms of an integrationists or assimilationists ideology; a separationist, nationalists influence; or neither.

And the third area of the interview sought information given the participants' reflection upon the discussion thus far in the interview to him gain and present meaning for political or civic activism (Seidman, 2013; Scott & Osborn, 2007). Seidman (2013) advises that through discovering the meaning that a participant constructs from phenomena, "intellectual and emotional connections between the participants" (p.22) lived experiences overall, and his experience with political activity. In other words, to recognize and make meaning of that which motivates him to engage civic activism. As applicable, follow-up questions sought reflections to gain knowledge as to whether there was any distinction in his construction of meaning for political activism throughout his life (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Lee, Steinberg, Piquero and Knight (2011) represent the commonly found influence of culture and the components thereof (Awokoya, 2012; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Picariello, 2015; Scott & Osborn, 2007) as a sense making mechanism of the social phenomena of political activism. Picariello (2015), moreover, advises that social contexts directly influence the identity development of folks. As she states, "self-concept represents a fundamental element intervening in the effects of environment on development and adjustment (and that) it is well known that a given context elicits specific responses on the part of the individual" (p.62). And adjustments to identity development directly effects perceptions and the meaning-making process, as presented in earlier chapters. Therefore, as the interviewer, I paid close attention to how questions were presented with attention to including references to cultural components spoken by the participant, either through implication or directly conveyed.

The second phone interview with each participant was the result of an initial analysis of the first interview responses. That analysis revealed common themes of helping others, community, and socioeconomics among the participants that called for additional reflection from the participants. The emergence of the common themes in context presented more questions as the basis for the second interview session. Upon initially analyzing the results from the second interviews, there was a theme common once again among the participants. To gain additional knowledge this time, a question was submitted to each participant via email. The responses from the participants revealed social media as a primary source for current events. Social media emerged as the participants' common source of political knowledge and perspectives.

The series of interviews served multiple duties. First, the follow-up interviews and questions served to eliminate conjecture on my part as the interviewer and researcher. Next, the responses from the follow-up interviews and questions provided a depth of context. Those depths of contextual data from which to analyze and capture and identify the respective perceptions and political identity development of the participants. And lastly, the additional questions were directly reflective of language used by the participant to limit the chance of influencing the respondents' elaboration (Apple, 1993; Heiphetz, Spelke, and Banaji, 2014; Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Linvill, 2011).

Data analysis.

As presented earlier, IPA will be engaged to perform the *data analysis* (Creswell, 2008). Smith, Larkins and Larkin (2012) and Smith and Osborn (2004; 2007) advise that use of IPA provides an opportunity to gain knowledge from the psychological world of another person. This knowledge sheds light upon processes by which one is perceiving

and making sense of phenomena encountered from the world. Additionally, such knowledge is a mechanism for exposing characteristics of one's identity and potential behaviors therefrom (Burke & Stets, 2009; Lawler, 2014; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012; Thompson & Carter, 1997). IPA allows for the exploration of that psychological world including reflection that reveals interests, values, and choices of that person.

The data analysis sought to record stated reflections from the data as a representation of the respondent's point of view as a product of their environment for hints of identity and perceptual development (Burke & Stets, 2009; Lawler, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2004, 2007). This process was recursive involving data preparation, data reduction, and theory generation throughout Chapters 4-6. The initial step in data analysis consisted of data preparation that, in-turn, consisted of transcribing each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005), along with the addition of line numbers for each transcribed line of the response content, for ease and accuracy to reference specific responses within the dissertation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005).

The initial step in data analysis consisted of data preparation including the transcription of each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). As review and interpretation of transcriptions proceeded, data reduction begun, whereby assignment of codes for each line of the transcribed content was assigned a theme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, pp.251-252, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). The next step of data reduction consisted of the *theming* of the coded content to aggregate, identify, and develop artefacts, or ideas, from the individual interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Gero & Mc Neill, 1998; Sarkar &

Chakrabarti, 2013; Warren & Karner, 2005). And then there was a reading of the themed content and memos to formulate central meanings of the determined artefacts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005).

Next, numbers were added to each transcribed line of the response content, for ease and accuracy to reference specific responses to support analysis and meaning making (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). The data is secured by a password protected university “cloud platform” accessible only by my dissertation chair and myself (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005).

As introduced earlier, the *data reduction* consisted of the assignment of *codes* for each completed action statement transcribed content toward determining broad themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). The revealed broad themes are included completely and in context as a representation of the person’s position while also being a protection against the researchers’ positionality and biases. The next step of data reduction will consist of a consolidation of the themes to identify, aggregate, and develop the social phenomena from the individual interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005). And then there will be a reading of the themed content and memos as necessary to begin to formulate a central meaning of the determined phenomena only as supported by relevant specific participant responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2008; Warren & Karner, 2005).

The functions and components of identity, as represented by Burke and Stets (2009) earlier in this chapter, shall be the primary objects of interest throughout the exploration of the reduced data. Each function and component being equated to a

psychological or social artefact, respectively. Secondly, this data exploration was executed through reading and re-reading the interview responses in conjunction with multiple analyses of the themes produced. Moreover, there were three interview explorations toward achieving what is typically understood as the “findings” for this study.

The first interview exploration (i.e. informational goal) sought phenomena of the participants’ lived experiences when it has come to think about political activism (Seidman, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). The initial protocol question reflected inquiry into the participant’s early family and home life (Seidman, 2013). Depending on the participant’s response, follow-up questions sought a more in-depth inquiry given the context. Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) suggest that how a participant frames the social norms from which his perception initiates, reflects either the philosophers’ perspective or the social science perspective (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014). The goal of any exploratory questions, as prompted by the participants’ response, sought to observe whether the context was exposing “[b]eliefs, expectations, group knowledge and common knowledge [that have] become central concepts in the development of a philosophical view of social norms” (p.1).

The second interview exploration sought to explore the participants’ present-day behaviors given social phenomena such as school or influential persons in their respective lives, for example (Seidman, 2013). The second protocol question consisted of verbiage toward gaining phenomena that are indicate exposure to the idea of political activism. Further inquiry was put forth toward identifying if the participant is drawing from the

influence of the identity characteristics as an integrationist; assimilationists; a separationist, a nationalist; or neither (Ball, Dagger & O'Neill, 2014).

The third interview exploration was an exercise in allowing the participant to reflect upon and make meaning of his responses (Seidman, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). More precisely, given the participants' recollection, I sought phenomena of meaning-making for the participants given their respective responses (Seidman, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). Additional exploratory questions were presented with the goal of attempting to discern whether there was any distinction in his construction of meaning for political activism throughout his life. Lee, Steinberg, Piquero and Knight (2011) represent the commonly found influence of culture (Awokoya, 2012; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Picariello, 2015) as a sense making mechanism of political activism. However, to introduce such phenomena like culture to the participant would seem to influence his response. Therefore, as the interviewer, attention to the entirety of each participants' responses was paid toward phenomena that included reference to culture.

The last step of the data analysis was fluid in that it was developed through the continuous development of the theoretical section of the literature review (Chapter 2) process, and the processes that are the development of the discussion and conclusion or Chapters 5 and 6, respectively. As developed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, there are observations within this study whereby the participants exhibited a portion of the elements of, say, the acceptance stage. Although he had not exhibited all the elements of the acceptance stage, he may still exhibit elements of the resistance or internalization stages. The social divisions of "race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.7), and the frameworks of

intersectionality, “social inequality; relationality; power; social context; complexity; and social justice” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.25) of intersectionality, however, are not hierarchical and stage dependent but they are consistent among the social divisions that each participant may identify with. That said, social divisions of intersectionality along with its framework (Collins & Bilge, 2016), not stage determination, of BID (Black Identity Development) are more dependable for gaining knowledge of the participants’ perceptions than stages-of-BID alone. The discussion and conclusion developed this position, further, as a mechanism toward gaining a deeper perspective of the perceptions of the participants toward being able to apply further in gaining knowledge of the perceptions of young adult Black men regarding civic and political activism (Burke and Stets, 2009; Lawler, 2014; Porter, 2013).

Quality assurance.

Quality assurance for the trustworthiness and thoroughness of the production of this study was incorporated through the techniques of credibility; confirmability; transferability; and catalytic validity (Creswell, 2008).

Credibility was achieved by ensuring that the methods and design are aligned with what is found in the participants’ communities (Shenton, 2004). To achieve credibility for the participants’ perceptions of their communities, specific statements were referenced to provide their perspective of the transcribed interviews while supporting researcher proclamations. To enhance credibility, this exercise served also as a member check of the proclamations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Moreover, this exercise served as a process of confirmability as a form of triangulation of used sources for interpreting data. All along, I distinguished between

learning how the data states the participant gained knowledge about political activities, and, how I gain knowledge, on how the participant gains knowledge about political activities (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012; Smith and Osborn, 2007).

Transferability will be achieved by recording the atmosphere of data collection spaces while paying close attention to speaking mannerisms like voice inflection, pauses, or repeated statements, for example (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Gibbs, 2007).

And the catalytic validity was reflected as the participants revealed deeper considerations of civic activity through an evolution of their responses (Lather, 1986). The knowledge gained from the findings provided information from which to develop material for training and activism, respectively, to counter challenges such as those in the problem statement.

And lastly, my positionality, as the researcher, remained foremost in awareness so that personal biases and assumptions were identifiable, and made separate from the participants' meaning making throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Clear is the fact that despite what I may be processing, the participant has choices in any situation and therefore there are multiple possibilities for participant reactions to social phenomena. Content including resistance as in Chapters 2, 5, and 6 exemplify consciousness of participant choice related to this matter. To allow for these choices to emerge, the idea that the participant always has a choice remains foremost in exploration and any analyses of the participants' reflections. Moreover, to ensure that findings draw from participants' experiences and perceptions rather than my prior experiences and perceptions. The approach to accomplish this awareness included determining and disclosing my positionality; considering the values that I brought to that positionality; and

self-reflection to determine what my positionality was in relation to the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Ganga & Scott, 2006). This relationship was determined by providing: 1) the social phenomena that contribute to researcher's positionality; 2) the social relations that contribute to the researcher's positionality; 3) the social codes of conduct that contribute to the researcher's positionality; and 4) the norms, behaviors, and value systems that contribute to the researcher's positionality.

The limitations to this qualitative study (Creswell, 2007, 2008) related primarily to the use of internal evaluation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hattam, Brennan, & et.al, 2009; Shenton, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Vedantam, 2010; Warren & Karner, 2005). Internal evaluation refers to a practice of the researcher's normal process of interpretation and analysis of participant responses without support of the participants' response. With such a limitation, there would be the potential for: 1) subconscious restraints that hide, or erroneously conclude meaning for, or cast judgement upon the participants' perceptions (Vedantam, 2010); 2) the participants' respective memories of civic and political exposure may not be accurate (Creswell, 2007, 2008); the potential that the participant may not feel comfortable with the researcher and therefore fail to disclose information (Creswell, 2007, 2008). And there is potential for the participant and researcher having conflicting purposes or goals for participating in this project (Warren & Karner, 2005). To counter internal evaluation, I was mindful to support all statements with support from participants' respective responses.

Next, there was the potential for limitations *to* evaluating perceptions (Creswell, 2007, 2008). As introduced earlier, there was a distinction between learning how the participant gains knowledge, and, how the researcher interpreted how the participant

gained knowledge about civic or political activism (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012; Smith and Osborn, 2007). Then, there were the limitations of the researcher positionality (Creswell, 2007, 2008). These limitations could stem from: 1) difference in cultural knowledge between the participant and researcher, for example. As a researcher from an older generation, my influences and development of my identity and belief systems may conflict with the students; 2) unconscious biases that researcher has (Bartlett, 2009; Vedantam, 2010); 3) generational difference between myself as researcher and the participants (Ganga & Scott, 2006); and 4) a class difference between myself as the researcher and the participants (Ganga & Scott, 2006).

Although not acting as the interviewer, the referring individuals provide a positionality limitation as well and should be kept in-mind. My fellow doctoral candidate mirrors my positionality and thus affected his decision to secure potential participants on my behalf. And my daughter knows each of the remaining participants. Although they are all the same age, there are limitations in that they know each other and that affected my daughter's decision to refer them based on her identity and positionality.

The perception of political activism for a person is the product of a combination of several societal (i.e. influence from without) and psychological (i.e. influence from within) components, as presented in earlier chapters (Lawler, 2014; Peck, Brodish, Malanchuk, Banerjee, & Eccles, 2014; Sullivan & Ghara, 2015). For clarification, the various functions and components of identity, mentioned earlier, are referred to in different terms by other symbolic interactionists like Seidman (2013). In terms of Burke and Stets (2009), the terms represent identity inputs in the forms of both social and

psychological phenomena or what Seidman (2013) refers to as constitutive elements. As reflected by Seidman (2013), lived experience

is made up of the many constitutive elements that are part of our experience that flow together, undifferentiated, while we are in the stream of action. It is only when we step out of the stream of flowing action, and through reflection reconstruct the constitutive elements become ‘phenomena.’” (p.17)

It is through the interview by which the participant will be enabled to reconstruct their memories toward making meaning as encouraged through the questioning. Seidman’s (2013) conception and explanation for the role of phenomena of lived experience and constitutive elements is instructive toward exploring characteristics of individual identity. Omi and Winant (2015) provide a formula from which an exploration of Black identity development should adhere by explaining that “Race is a ‘crossroads’ where social structure and cultural representation meet” (p.124, italics added). And that “Race is not only a matter of politics, economics, or culture, but operates simultaneously on all these levels of experience. It is a pre-eminently social phenomenon that suffuses each individual identity” (p.151). These statements illustrate various constitutive elements through which Black identity development may be explored.

Jackson III (2012) take the formula a step further through a series of constitutive elements that he calls elements of culture (cultural elements). The elements of culture are: “biological and extended family; the Black community; faith-based institutions; social clubs; schools; and other socializing institutions that carry the uniqueness of Black/African American culture” (p.41). For Jackson III (2012) and Omi and Winant (2015) these cultural elements are products of racism that permeates Black communities, is distributed through socialization and

institutions, and is engaged by Black folks from a very early age. The cultural elements will be considered as a part in the discussion section of the dissertation alongside the findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter will represent the emergent findings from the interview exchanges with the participants. The content consists of a brief biographic reintroduction for each participant and me as the study facilitator. The reintroduction includes the status of our lives and the political environment during the time of the interview exchanges could be helpful (Whaley, 2016). Additionally, this chapter consists of a brief grounding in the social environment during the interviews. There is then a presentation of the three emergent findings from the participant reflections. And the chapter will conclude with a recap that establishes a basis for the discussions of Chapter 5.

Anyon (2005) explains that young adults and adolescents are especially affected by the political environment, the feelings that are perceived by him. At the time of the interviews, the associated feelings of the political environment was associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. Exposure to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement would affect these folks' perceptions and identity developments (Anyon, 2005; Ball, Dagger, & O'Neill, 2014). The interviews took place in January of 2018 during after the revitalized efforts of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. As Daileida (2016) reported, "Black Lives Matter didn't form from nothing after the fatal police shooting of Mike Brown on Aug.9, 2014, but it was then that the movement began to build the longevity to survive and grow for the two years to come" (Daileida, 2016, p,1). Although according to Daileida (2016) the BLM movement made its' bones, if you will, through the awareness brought to the police action shooting of young Black men starting with Mike Brown. Since that incident, there has been no shortage of coverage of similar incidents repeating and their proximal association to the BLM movement (CNN, 2019). These

events and the messages conveyed by the BLM movement illustrate negative treatment of young adult Black men, exposing them to this association over an extended period.

Reintroduction of the Participants

Knowledge of these ‘treatments’ will be drawn from the emergent reflections and responses of interviews of three young adult Black men: Acey, Jason, and Nelson.

Overall, reflecting back upon the exchanges as a collection among the participants, there was a shared ‘me, us, and them’ influence that is evident by each of their reflections. The influences expressed exposure to negative treatment through the social contexts revealed through their respective reflections, in association with their identities, which recalls DuBois’ conception of double consciousness (Walker, 2019; Whaley, 2016).

Acey.

So, Acey is a twenty-one-year-old and going into his senior year in a private college in the south-central region of the United States. Acey grew up in that same region attending a private pre-kindergarten school, and public suburban schools through high school. Acey’s reflections consisting of race, generally, for him were from an aspect of ‘learning why’ things are as they are upon his experiences and learning to interact with folks to move along. In terms of thinking in terms of resistance as an indicator of his political identity development, there were evidences for tendencies by which he desired to learn to get along with folks while thinking through how to reconcile differences.

Jason.

Jason is also a twenty-one-year-old, going into his senior year of state college as well, in the south-central region of the United States. Jason also grew up in the south-

central region of the United States attending public schools. As shall be exhibited throughout this chapter, Jason also grew up in a neighborhood with socioeconomic challenge that stands out as affecting his perspectives of social contexts. In terms of Jason's reflections related to race, his overall tenor was clearly more resistant to the social contexts that he had experienced.

Nelson.

And Nelson is an eighteen-year-old senior attending a public high school in the Midwest. The free and reduced lunch rate for his school is 61%. Similar to Jason, Nelson's experience growing up in a socioeconomically challenged neighborhood is referenced significantly throughout his reflections. In terms of recognition of social contexts, Nelson reflects a position of 'learning what's going on' in the world pertaining to politics and race so as to reserve a moral basis from which to establish a political identity and action stance.

The content of this chapter is the product of the data reduction of the interviews with the study's three participants. The goal for the product of the chapter was two-fold. The first being an exploration of the responses to gain knowledge from the participants' specific reflections to the study questions; the product of which shall be discussed in Chapter 5. And the second is an initiating development of a theory for continually gaining knowledge of the perceptions of political activation by these participants as young adult Black men.

Finding 1: Helping Each Other Out and Up

Politics, given the contexts of the participants' reflections, are both local and relational. Throughout the entire process of conducting interviews with the participants,

a particular exchange stood out as soon as it was spoken, “getting reciprocated back” (Acey 2, interview, line 196). During the coding and theming portion of data reduction, the phrase emerged as a common thematic conception among the other participants. For the participant that spoke the phrase, Acey, the phrase was a part of a reflection and response prompted by a follow-up question to tell me how and why his experiences helped him to understand being involved socially and politically. Contextually, the phrase was a portion of Acey’s response stating that “They enjoy you and that’s why I like seeing and getting reciprocated back, those words from them and that emotional attachment” (Acey 2, interview, lines 195-196). This context suggests a relational context of helping others in terms of connection to the identity frameworks of this participant. Considered in this light, the oddness of the “getting reciprocated back” began to make sense through the filters of the identity components and frameworks of identity, as presented in Chapter 3.

Upon applying this contextual lens, the context of “getting reciprocated back” is expressed in other terms earlier in the interview, for example. In that phrase Acey explained that “I love volunteering because the feeling that you get from helping everybody else and seeing how people who don’t have what you do, when they light up to see you’re taking that time to come and give them you” (Acey 2, interview, lines 189-192). Here he explains that what he enjoys getting back, as an input component, from volunteering, as an output that others can witness, is ‘the knowing’ that he is going to help others and the feeling he will get from doing so. The portion of the statement conveying that “I love volunteering because the feeling that you get from helping everybody else” (Acey2, interview, lines 189-190) exemplifies this knowing as

motivation, a cognitive function initiated by an affective function. This knowing he is going to help others reveals a quality of ‘anticipation’ of feeling, as an affective or emotional function of volunteering, within the cognitive function of knowing that he will get something back from volunteering. A positive affective motivation that is associated with his identity.

So, a quick summary of the finding thus far is, that: for Acey, the act of volunteering, as a representation of his social and political activation, is based from a cognitive function of getting something back as a characteristic of his identity. The cognitive function simultaneously being an affective function. This “getting something back” is prompted by the anticipation of experiencing the feeling of seeing others “light up” from giving of himself. This giving of himself, or “(his) taking that time to come and give them (himself)” (Acey2, interview, lines 191-192). Moreover, the context of Acey’s knowing in lines 189-190 evidence that his anticipation is a conscious level of his identity functioning when the prompt is volunteering as a politically social phenomenon.

Acey’s response suggests that this anticipated input of the feeling he will get from volunteering is an emotional function of Acey’s identity. The conclusion for this position of being an emotional function of his identity is twofold. Firstly, to “feel” or to have a “feeling” is an emotional or affective response at some level. And this conclusion is additionally derived from a broader consideration of the context for anticipating the input of anticipating how folks that he volunteers for or helps will react. Said another way, the contextual statement, as a reminder, is, “They enjoy you and that's why I like seeing and getting reciprocated back, those words from them and that emotional attachment” (Acey 2, interview, lines 196-197). The “emotional attachment” is a cognitive function, or

reason, for his anticipation of getting something back. In addition to volunteering as a social and political output of Acey's helping others, the "reciprocating back" doesn't only reveal functions and components of his identity, but it also, is evidence for Acey's identity development as a young adult Black man.

Given my understanding, a young adult Black male is a product of his interaction with social and cultural phenomena. Referring to the context of the conclusion, thus far, for "getting reciprocated back," a portion of the context to this point is this portion of the statement again, "They enjoy you and that's why I like seeing and getting reciprocated back" (Acey 2, interview, line 196). First, what is meant by "they enjoy you"? The context of this portion of the statement in its entirety is that

They love it, and especially when it's a young person who's doing positive things. Not just that, but an African American doing positive things instead of someone on the news, in jail, anything like that. They enjoy you and that's why I like seeing and getting reciprocated back. (Acey 2, interview, lines 193-196)

Culturally, the statement provides direction toward identifying cultural components of Black identity. First, the opportunity to volunteer for Acey is motivated by the anticipation that he is seen as a young Black man doing "positive things." Whether he was told at some point in his life or not, bearing in-mind that residue from the social movement of BLM, his perception is that "negative things" include an expectation by others that young Black men are either "in-jail (or) on the news" is an input standard; a psychological function that is indicative of Acey's identity processing system. Again, this positive/negative conflict recalls evidence of double consciousness as a potential player in Acey's expression of his identity. As a refresher, an input standard is a component of identity that has become an established set of meanings by an individual triggered by a perceived social input.

So, at this point-in-summary, Acey has an input standard, as a component of his identity process system, of young African American men being either in jail or on the news. Moreover, components of identity have a nature of being indicative of a simultaneity of social and psychological components or artefacts that play into and through political activities. For example, the input standard of young African American men being either in jail or on the news affects his processing to the extent that he volunteers to help others so that he is seen as a young African American man doing “positive things.” And thus, evidence for the potential influence of double consciousness.

Considering this position, by Acey, and the mere mention and existence of input standards consisting of the identifying artefact of being an African American “young person who’s doing positive things” (Acey 2, interview, line 193). This statement is evidence that some degree of internalization has occurred for Acey to the extent that social conflict with his identity has occurred. This statement is exhibiting a form of nurturing the idea that he is African American as a sense of self. My interpretation of Acey’s response toward this conclusion is based upon his use of the term African American which he sees as a distinction from other racial identities and cultures. And, additionally, this conclusion is presented given my knowledge and belief of a White dominant culture, my input standard, in which he lives given the whole of his responses. And, again, the haunting existence potential of the conception of double consciousness.

At this point-of-summary, a narrative is that as a young adult African American man, he helps others because he and those he helps believe that young adult African American men are just in-jail or on the news. Additionally, he anticipates the opportunity

to volunteer because of this negative input standard. And, Acey has shown evidence that he is distinguishing himself culturally from White folks and culture while nurturing himself as a young adult African American man. It dawns upon me that the need to make these distinctions is probably due to Acey's responses including his "getting reciprocation back" by being perceived as doing "positive things" (Acey 2, interview, lines 193-196) as a young adult African American man. And, moreover, that overall this is processed as exposure to social injustices, as inputs, that contribute to adjustment to his social behaviors, as input standards.

The structure for the balance of this section will be based from common theme or response among the participants. Each common theme or response became the subject for a subsection, for example, the first subsection is the common response, "getting reciprocation back." Before moving on to the next participant following this same structure, social and or psychological artefacts will be identified throughout each participant subsection to compare among the other participants. This will be done by numerous data reductions and analyses among the participants. The second data reduction, of the remaining participants will continue the exploration of their responses related to the "getting reciprocated back" finding.

Jason was the second interview for the study. As with Acey, the analysis of Jason's responses initiated by seeking a common code or theme related to the conception of "getting reciprocated back" in relation to reflections containing expressions of interests in social contexts. Said another way, those social contexts that are reflected by Jason that expresses interests what is 'political' for him. Jason did not use the phrase "getting reciprocated back," rather the conception is conveyed through his expression of political

interests as drawn through the data reduction process. The “getting reciprocated back” was a product of Acey’s response to a question including requesting additional reflection upon his understanding when presented with terms such as political, social, and or interest. The artefact “interest” was common among the participants as a prompt. A form of the term “interest” will serve as the initiate of the analyses here for Jason and then for Nelson also.

The specific question that included “interest” as a prompt within it precipitated from a follow-up question. The initial question was actually a request presented as, “Tell me a little bit about your (high) school experiences. Take it away from the home-front with school and tell me a little bit about your school experiences.” Jason responded to this question by stating that,

Well, in high school I was part of a little high school fraternity. We always liked to talk about politics and state, and world issues and our community. Focusing on the community. Like a lot of projects while in service. Like a lot of voter registration drives and things like that. High school was just my escape from home. (Jason, interview, lines 34-38)

Jason’s phrase “my escape from home” caught my attention along with the wonderment for wanting to know more about the ‘political fraternity’. The latter won out because of the artefact, political, even though the “home” term is a common social structure in the literature in relation to culture and its influence on individual identity. That said, I asked the follow-up question, “what got you interested in (that political fraternity)? How did you start up within this, quote-unquote, may I call it, political fraternity within your high school” (Jason, interview, lines 38-41)? Jason responded with,

It wasn't just a political fraternity it was a high school fraternity, period. What had got me interested was, when I was coming in as a freshman. It was called the Gents and you always see these guys dressed up and doing

all these things like different community service and like a step team and these guys always hanging around each other. That was like, 'Oh that's like really dope'.(Jason, interview, lines 41-46)

The follow-up question was based from my misunderstanding Jason's initial response. Although he mentioned that they talked about politics, the fraternity was not a "political fraternity." However, stepping back and considering his reflection in context, hints of double consciousness are evident in that Jason found interest in a desire to be associated with the 'positive' perceptions that the Gents conveyed for him. Recalling Acey's desire to have others see him in a positive light, Jason's response does not seem to state, at least explicitly, that side of the equation for him. The first response still reveals that Jason placed value in being a member of The Gents because they discussed politics. This interest was not prompted by my initial request, but the interest turned out to be initially interesting because of how the individuals presented themselves in the eyes of Jason; how he perceived them.

So, to summarize to this point, Jason's high school experience was interesting because of his opportunity to discuss politics, discuss community issues, and to associate with others to perform community service. Jason "got reciprocated back" from attending high school because of these opportunities. That said, I reviewed Jason's transcript to see if there were any more in-depth insights into Jason's interest in politics, community issues, and or community service. Later in the interview I asked Jason, "Are there any other influences, activities or events in your early life that would help me to understand more about how you came to participate or have interest in community type activities" (Jason, interview, lines 70-72)? Jason responded in saying that,

Yes, like I said, I stay with my dad and my stepmom. Early on in my life, I stayed with my mom who lives in what people would consider as the ghetto part of the City, and so I had seen as a kid, first hand, what it was

like to live in the struggle and had to have the odds stacked against you. And like I've seen families tear apart up. Torn apart. I've seen some just really crappy shit (and) I went to a crappy elementary school. I knew that somebody had to make a difference, and it has to be somebody that looks like us to make a difference because, if not us then who (Jason, interview, lines 73-79)?

Given this response, Jason's interest in community has basis from his experiencing, along with others, living "in the struggle." Overall, Jason's experience reveals that his interest in community is an affective function of his identity system, evident of significant sense of resistance. His interest in community is associated with conflict associated with perceived social inequality, as emphasized through his phrasing "I've seen families tear apart up. Torn apart. I've seen some just really crappy shit," (Jason 1, interview, lines 73-79), for which he internalized as a way of being perceived that opposes his perception of the Gents, for example. And his experience also evidences internalization, just as Acey had experienced, as interest in community is associated with perceived social inequality. And his experience also evidences internalization indicative of his political identity development, as evidence by Acey earlier. This position is supported by Jason's exhibition for nurturing his community for example when he states that "somebody had to make a difference, and it has to be somebody that looks like us to make a difference." And Nelson was the final interview.

Throughout the interview with Nelson there was no direct statement reflecting getting something back. However, the conception of interest, in contexts of politics as a prompting artefact to help others presented itself just as it had for Acey and Jason. The request that prompted the artefact and reason for revealing Nelson's interest was to tell me, as the explorer, a little bit more about what got him started talking with others about politics. Nelson advised that "mainly this election or the past election. A lot of stuff that

have been going on in the world” (Nelson, interview, lines 18-19) got him engaged in talking about politics to others.

After a series of follow-up questions as discussion with Nelson, the “helping others” theme revealed itself as an output of his identity system. Evidence for this output was revealed by Nelson through stating, “once you figure out how everything works, you can get more involved and you can start to help people” (Nelson, interview, lines 107-108). But, toward gaining an understanding for what his interest consists, through what process of perception and recollection did Nelson arrive at the “helping people” common theme?

The exchange that presented the artefact of “interest in politics” initiated through my asking Nelson to tell me a little bit more about that and what got you all-- or got you starting to talk with them about the politics (Nelson, interview, lines 16-17)? Nelson responded by stating that a friend explained to him the difference between conservatives and liberals and that “(he) just found that very interesting” (Nelson, interview, line 21). At this point, I wondered why he used those terms rather than Republican and Democrat because those terms seemed more typical.

As I think more about why I wondered this, it may very well be a bias on my part because I did not think of, what I presumed to be, the political parties in those terms until after high school. Indeed, I had forgotten that Nelson is a part of an afterschool discussion group of current events and political topics run by a government and economics teacher at his high school (Nelson, interview, line 68). Later in the conversation I asked Nelson, what types of subjects are interesting to you, these days if you will? Are there any subjects that are-- go ahead? Nelson advised that Government

and Economics classes were of interest to him. His response was that “it just lets you know how the world works and that's what I'm interested in” (Nelson, interview, lines 70-71). My immediate follow-up question in line 72 was, why do you care how the world works, do you think? And Nelson replied, “Because I live here.” And finally getting to his response including “to help people,” my prompting question was, why does that make a difference “because we live here”? Is there anything that, in addition to that, living here that made you interested in politics or how stuff works in those ways? Upon reading back the transcript, I noticed that my follow-up question, as just presented, I realized that I inadvertently asked with the phrasing “because ‘we’ live here,” rather than reflecting to ask why “he” lived here which could make a difference in how Nelson responded.

As stated, there could be a significant difference in the way that the question was presented. In other words, there may have been a different response if I had not included “because we live here” as a prompting artefact. That said, going forward, the analysis will explore Nelson's response in terms of his collective responses toward shedding light on how the “because ‘I’ live here” response ties back into the other participant's responses. The context through which the analysis will continue are social and political interests, helping others, and what each is “getting back” from such activities.

Jason's version of where he lived and its relationship to helping others were predominantly as descriptors of home life, his family, or his houses (Jason, interview, lines 7, 8, and 109). Thematically, they were respectively labeled as “home life.” However, there was one exception whereby Jason reflected upon his experience while he

lived with his mom in the “ghetto.” While there, he identified with neighbors who could be perceived as “needing help.” He advised that,

Early on in my life, I stayed with my mom who lives in what people would consider as the ghetto part of the City, and so I had seen as a kid, first hand, what it was like to live in the struggle and had to have the odds stacked against you. (Jason, interview, lines 73-76)

The question that prompted this response sheds light on the basis for Jason’s meaning of helping others. The question was, are there any other influences, activities or events in your early life that would help me to understand more about how you came to participate or have interest in community type activities (Jason, interview, lines 70-72)? The term “community” stood out as a link to the responses of Acey and Nelson. An association that then emerges as Jason’s use of the phrases “to live in the struggle” and “to have the odds stacked against you.” Nelson responded similarly when he advised that he and his family have experienced living from the receipt of welfare. And that he needed to advise that “When I was younger we were in need of welfare, and it's like we were I guess a model to like not all people abuse it; some people need it” (Nelson, interview, lines 28-29). These response artefacts provide a link between “helping others” and Nelson’s “living there,” like Jason. In-fact, a link between “helping others” and living there” as sought initially for Nelson has presented itself. The link is the response artefact of needing to prove “that not all people abuse (the use of welfare), some people need it.” Clearly as an input standard, this idea was learned from somewhere outside himself.

So, at this point, the summary is that Nelson and Jason each have linked “helping others” to their living in the same neighborhood, or community, with those in which they find interest in helping. Nelson’s link is that some folks need welfare and need it, as he

has experienced. In context, Nelson does not imply a need to receive something back from these folks who share his experience in this sense. Recalling his interest in “knowing how things work” does imply that there are competing social contexts for him in forming his political identity and activation as an indicator for the existence of some form of double conscious influence. Similarly, Jason’s references to some having the odds stacked against them and needing help does more directly indicate the influence of some form of double consciousness, as reflected earlier. Moreover, each young man has experience of the environments in which those that they have interest in helping. Each respectively providing an example of socioeconomic challenges for which they each have interest in helping others to resist. As an additional note, Nelson’s favorite subjects in school were stated to be Government and Economics (Nelson, interview, line 68).

Now, Acey’s responses do include a reference to socioeconomic challenges as phenomena, in common with Nelson and Jason. However, the previously presented statement from Acey explaining helping others “who don’t have what you do” (Acey 2, interview, line 195) does refer to those experiences of Nelson and Jason without experiencing those socioeconomic challenges himself. But what does this tell us, as the remaining link among the three stemming from “getting reciprocated back” has no apparent direction forward. At this point, the need for a second round of interviews were conducted based from the remaining connecting theme of “community.”

Overall, Finding1 as gained knowledge of the perceptions of political activation for the participants as young adult Black men emerged as a sense of helping others. The contexts of this finding, for each participant is to some extent local and or relational. In other words, ‘politics is local and relational’ for the participants. The term ‘local’

represents the proximity of the political activities and activation in relation to proximity of folks that are being helped. Nelson's basis for meaning making of his political activation, for example, was stated through his phrase "because I live here." And the term 'relational' revealing that political activation through helping others for the participants is also based upon some form of relationship. The form of relationship exemplified by Acey revealed a level of affective influence upon their identities. And to that extent, the relational aspects of the participants' political activations teases interpretations that at least imply some level of double consciousness, or identity conflict due to their respective awareness of politically social phenomena and the feelings conveyed through that awareness (Walker, 2019).

Finding 2: Helping Each Other Out and Up from Common Struggles

Given the emerging data through Finding1, there is a need for further exploration into what is understood as community, for the participants, in relation to "getting reciprocation back" for helping others. In context, referencing politics for the participants, community in terms of Finding1 hints of a common struggle for immediate needs and for social uplift. However, content from the existing responses were unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory to the extent that a clearer pronouncement among their responses that provides an understanding of community is at best implicit. Therefore, a follow-up interview of the participants will be conducted. The relevance of this interview is included for each participant in the content to follow. The relevance, moreover, is expressed as influences on the participants' respective development of political identity and understanding for the meaning of the 'political'. Whereas 'the political' shall include

the components of Finding1, and an evolution of meaning-making emerges from ‘helping each other’ of the respective participants’ community.

The follow-up questions were the same for each participant to gain their understanding of “community” and ‘the political’. As in the first finding through Acey, Jason reflected upon the question of community and expressed an attention grasping statement. Jason’s explanation included the statement explaining that community is “a gathering of people that's looking out for each other, that's doing things together, that's not just being yourself or just being an 'I', but it's like a team” (Jason 2, interview, lines 46-47). As he elaborated on his explanation, Jason reflected the existence of some form of social conflict as well that exists among he and his community. This conflict is exemplified through his elaborating that the “looking out for each other” exhibits struggle “Because you got to do the things that you want to be. It's not enough to point out problems and not offer solutions for them” (Jason 2, interview, lines 56-57).

Immediately prior, evidence of the influence of a form of double consciousness is reflected upon by Jason, establishing a position of mind and political identity development. While reflecting upon what he is perceiving as a state of struggle for folks of his community he states that “I was saying we still don't have enough black people at the forefront of white politics sitting at the table, and you still got segregation with the help from the government and neighborhoods and hoods still being segregated” (Jason 2, interview, lines 32-34). In other words, as is symptomatic of double consciousness there exists “a sensation of duplicity that entails internal strife” (Walker, 2019, p.122).

Currently as a university upperclassman, Jason’s response is telling me that community is a coming together of folks with common political struggle that consists of

the pervasive social context of race. And that a measure of political identity development could include the awareness of this sense of double consciousness and social struggles among folks in his community. The folks that have come together to also look out for each other by doing things together. The nature for doing things for each other as community, moreover, is in the sense of being a “team.” Jason illustrates his motivation when he explains that team members help each other

Because you got to do the things that you want to be. It's not enough to point out problems and not offer solutions for them. You got to now put the work in because it only takes one person to change the world. Your helping others could change somebody's whole life and that can cause them to change somebody else's life and then it becomes a triple effect. (Jason 2, interview, lines 56-60)

As the context of this meaning for community develops, it is indicating that Jason's identity development is indicative of the “political” including some form of struggle for his community, his “team.” With the established foundation for political being the provision of assistance to others while “getting reciprocation back,” there is also an understanding of community that plays a part in this understanding of the political. For Jason, each is understood as a team member. Whereas the proverbial game for the team is helping others in a social struggle.

Exploring the latter portion of Jason's response, he explains that community is “doing things together, that's not just being yourself or just being an 'I', but it's like a team.” An understanding being that folks in a community come together to reciprocally get something from each other. As I think about this response and interpretation, a response from Acey comes to mind. He conveyed that an aim for helping others is that each “team” member “Give (positivity) to your team. And to change how everybody's seeing their group of people” (Acey 2, interview, lines 206-207). The term

“everybody’s” is taken to include Acey and all that make-up his team. For Acey, his political identity development indicates a dimension of context and purpose to a social struggle.

Acey conveys that team members of a community promote positive perceptions of themselves as a political activity. Moreover, there is a need to do so to counter negative perceptions experienced in society. As Acey states, “there is so much negativity when it comes to African-Americans whether it be a male or female, there's always a negative aspect as far as being ghetto, being ratchet, drug dealers, gang bangers, things like that” (Acey 2, interview, lines 198-200). Recalling the conception of double consciousness in a sense of intersectionality, not only is race a source of “duplicity (entailing) internal strife,” but that the participants’ gender also contributes to their internal strife and perceptions. Acey represents socioeconomic status through use of the term “ghetto” in addition to the other perceived identity characteristics, as negatively tinged. This tinge of the term “ghetto” is reaffirmed by Jason in his responses (Jason 1, interview, line 74). And that haunting of double consciousness re-emerges, this time through a reflection of Jason.

Continuing exploration for the understanding the perceptions of Acey’s team members countering negative perceptions of each other, I turn to a perspective of team as further understanding of identity perceptions for his community. Conversely there is Jason’s reflection about the positives that he aspires to when explaining that “Oh that's like really dope” (Jason 1, interview, lines 44-45) when speaking of coming across his high school fraternity, the Gents. A group through which his political interests and feelings of positive well-being are explained as “you always see these guys dressed up

and doing all these things like different community service” (Jason 1, interview, lines 42-43). With these understandings of the political identity development of Acey and Jason, I move to Nelson.

Nelson’s understanding of the “political” was actually sparked as a subject of interest initially by friends from school. A response by Nelson that turned out to be related to a conception of team that developed through his response to whether he had political influences as he was growing up. Nelson’s response was “Yes and no, because I feel like now it helped me make my decision on which side I stood on” (Nelson 1, interview, lines 27-28). Use of the phrase “which side I stood on” caught my attention, and frankly was completely unexpected. Instead, Nelson was saying that he was at a point of trying to understand what politics means and determine what he believed politically was clearly an indication of his political identity development. In that sense, the context of this phrase represents itself. Elaborating, Nelson advised that “when I was younger, we were in need of welfare, and it’s like we were I guess a model to like not all people abuse it; some people need it” (Nelson 1, interview, lines 28-29). Recalling the context within which Nelson disclosed this process of making meaning, and, the recurring conception of externally compelled internal strife and double consciousness among all participants.

There is a perception by Nelson that because his family received welfare benefits, he in-turn felt that there is a stigma that must be overcome in doing so. Stigma tied back into the negative perception phenomenon found in relation to participants’ community earlier, as well. A struggle to not be recognized as having some nefarious intent for receiving welfare; where the receipt of welfare plays into his identification of himself and

those within his community. Socioeconomic status as a stipulation for Nelson's deciding which team, he would stand on has a defining characteristic. For Nelson, his team would help him with the struggle to not be recognized as some bad guy because his family received welfare. This defining characteristic is reminiscent of Acey earlier in conveying that a function of community is "(giving positivity) to your team. And to change how everybody's seeing their group of people" (Accey 2, interview, lines 206-207). These representing statements along with Nelson's presentation of deciding "which side he stood on." Together they present that between Acey, and Nelson's communities are separate but share moral positions and drives. Although there are also distinguishing influences among team members between Acey and Nelson's communities.

An exchange with Acey provides ground from which to explore these distinguishing influences. In the exchange Acey distinguishes between "his" community and "another" community. To capture the context, the following series of exchanges is presented here.

Interviewer: All right, next question. Define community for me.

Accey: Community. I believe that a community is a system where not only people but also the things around purpose to help to bring structure, as well as, support to help one, or a group of people, strive to make way as well as to come together too as one to help support everybody as a whole.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, just a little bit different. Define your community. If there is no difference, it's cool. I just wanted to see, think of it in a different way to see if it means something different, and if not, that's cool too.

Accey: I want to say, there is a complete difference. I will only say in my community, as well I'm pretty sure as other people, there are good and bad and although our people really see the good is welcome, it's also the bad because it shows what not to do, as well as, they teach you the things that you need in order to continue on.

Interviewer: Just a little bit further and I think it's the last follow up, what would you mean by bad?

Acey: Really, anything that isn't necessarily helping you but also holding you back from anything you want to do or for you to continue progressing each and every day.

Interviewer: Okay, what's an example of something that would hold you back?

Acey: Probably at this moment, negative people or anyone who's not trying to help me with my best interest. (Acey 3, interview, lines 12-32)

Generally, the distinction between “his” community and communities “outside” boils down to two functions. First, whereas Nelson has revealed a ‘politics is relational’ perspective of ‘the political’ in previous reflections, like consideration for his moral positioning, this distinction now reveals his perspective that politics can also be ‘local’. The “outside” community is described as a system that provides structure, indication, “help to strive to make a way” and to support unity among individuals and groups. Thinking in terms of community struggle and the participants’ reflections collectively thus far, not only are they aware, or becoming aware, that they choose teams, but that the proverbial game being played is a struggle to be recognized as human beings, citizens, and or neighbors who are being stigmatized within a historically problematic context.

Nelson also recognizes that there is a structure “outside” his community that affects his life. This implication comes from my asking Nelson about his favorite subjects in school. The exchange went this way:

Nelson: I will say US Government and Economics.

Interviewer: [laughs] I was staring at the--

Nelson: Yes. Because it looks like-- it just lets you know how the world works and that's what I'm interested in.

Interviewer: Why do you care how the world works, do you think?

Nelson: Because I live here. (Nelson 1, interview, lines 68-73)

Nelson’s last statement shall be considered further after developing the current exploration of Acey’s understanding further. Now, Acey’s idea of his community, however, has a function of being instructive while being proscriptive in nature. His

community provides instruction for how to “continue on” given the “indication” provided through the structure in-place via outside communities. An example that comes to mind were instructions provided to me as a young Black man if they encounter law enforcement. They, as I, are instructed to always keep our hands in plain sight, make no sudden movements, be polite and to follow indication. In other words, as most directly referred to by Acey, his community members provide instruction for what to, and not to, do to accomplish his interests and progression through life.

Exchanges with Acey and Nelson added dimension for understanding “their” communities is reflected through Acey’s stating that “(folks in his community) love (when you help them), and especially when it’s a young [African American] person” (Acey 2, interview, line 193). Now, when Nelson was asked to define community, he initiated his response through stating that “For me, I feel like community is where you live and the people who live around you” (Nelson 2, interview, lines 31-32). As stated, Nelson’s meaning for community is represented by three social experiences formulated around “where (he lives)” and “the people around (him)”. The first experience being an affective perception of certain social observations. And the other experiences being the determinations of “where (he lives)” and “the people who live around (him).” Use of the term “feel,” as a contextual precursor to the balance of his definition indicates that there is something that has affectively influenced his understanding of community. Prior findings reveal that the primary contexts for each participant is helping others.

Toward exploring the participant responses for a bridge of understanding among “feeling,” “where you live,” and “people who live around you,” I asked Nelson to explain why he enjoyed or had interest in helping others. Nelson explained that “There's

sometimes (when) people are put in tough situations that they didn't ask for. The world is not always fair. If someone needs help, I try to help" (Nelson 2, interview, lines 36-37). As I interpret this statement, Acey's distinction of communities comes to mind. Nelson does not make a clear statement that distinguishes community here, but he is conveying the need for folks in his elaboration upon what community is for him to provide "instruction" as a form of help. The "instructional" aspect of one's community presented by Acey is a perspective through which this implication of Nelson's response is generated. The "tough situations" portion of Nelson's response is reminiscent of Jason's "(seeing) as a kid, firsthand, what it was like to live in the struggle and had to have the odds stacked against you" (Jason, interview, lines 75-76).

Continuing this line of thinking through an affective lens of "(living) in the struggle," Acey speaks of a "something" that influences his perceptions and understanding of community. The "something," being realized by Acey is a feeling the need to help others within his community because of these prior experiences. As Acey stated,

(Folks in the community being helped) enjoy you [being positive] and that's why I like seeing and getting reciprocated back, those words from them and that emotional attachment. Connecting with that, how I just said when there is so much negativity when it comes to African Americans whether it be a male or female, there's always a negative aspect as far as being ghetto, being ratchet, drug dealers, gang bangers, things like that. All this makes it worse, all this shit going around. I always make a force to be a change and not to be a negative statistic. I always make a point to do that -- Of course, there always will be people who have a negative outlook, or they find something negative because they want to. But still, as a whole people as a positive person, try to make something of yourself but also try to give it to somebody else. Give it to your team. And to change how everybody's seeing their group of people. (Acey 2, interview, lines 196-207)

So, Acey reveals a fair amount of content that provides meaning for the affective influences of this “it” that is made worse, this “something,” this “struggle” that he, Jason and Nelson, feel that they must help others to address. Firstly, the “something” is a condition of his community that affectively influences his helping others. And given Acey’s distinction for meaning of “community,” those that he helps in his community also help him to address the “something.” The “something,” as condition, is the feeling that there is a negative perception of them by folks in and outside his community. And this struggle is experienced by Jason and Nelson as well. Although each participant is influenced by this feeling of being perceived negatively by the community, their individual aspects of the experience differs. Jason’s aspect of perceived negativity is socioeconomic as well as through the presentation of a need for Black leaders in his generation. And Acey’s aspect of negativity is through experiencing instruction from his family and by engaging in society generally.

Jason presents another conditional aspect of this negative perception by which his community is perceived as violent, like the perspective through which Acey explains his perception of the condition. As part of the planned follow-up questions for the participants, I asked each of them to put himself in the position of Trayvon Martin. I then asked what he would have said to the security officer to convince him to not shoot. Jason explained that he would say that “I’m not the stereotype of thug or violent person that you think that I am” (Jason 2, interview, lines 74-75). Nelson responded similarly when he explained that “I would just remind them that not all black people are bad. Just lighten up a little bit.” And when asked to explain what he meant by “bad” Nelson elaborated that “we’re not out here to put ourselves in situations like being involved in drugs or

crime” (Nelson 2, interview, lines 43-48). Now, Acey’s response provided additional dimension to how his understanding of how he is perceived negatively plays into identity and feeling. Acey illustrated that

It's really hard to think of words to say to change somebody's mind when they already had that preconceived notion of who they're going to be. So, even when possibly, you know, I might live around or I'm here with my parents like he was or I live here in this area, you can say all these things but if somebody has that preconceived notion of you are this type of person based upon how you look, how you talk, how you walk, any of those factors, who knows if you can say anything and get a response. (Acey 3, interview, lines 61-67)

Collectively, the participants advise that their understanding for the negative perspective by which the community perceives them, affects their ability to represent themselves when being “directed” by law enforcement as agents of the community. Or as Acey suggested, “who knows if you can say anything and get a response.” Interestingly, the latter part of Acey’s statement suggests that other communities provide “instruction” to its members. Meaning that this proscriptive aspect of the individual’s specific community is not unique to him. A primary distinction is that “his” community provides instruction to watch for “negative people” who are not interested in helping him toward achieving what is in his best interest.

But Jason, expressed a need for instruction from African American influences because they have his best interests in-mind (Jason 1, interview, line 56) and because they have “(walked in his) shoes” (Jason 1, interview, line 58). Whereas “influence” meant a “Black leader” that provides indication for progressing through life. Is this indicative of a different meaning for each of the participants’ community? So, if there is a common stipulation between the participants for membership in their respective communities, then there is instruction provided that is in their best interests. So again,

through feeling a need to be instructed how to navigate daily experiences, to a common theme among the participants is this condition through which they, as members of their communities, perceive that outside communities equate them to negativity. Implications to if not explicit reference to some form of double consciousness and the strife and unease attributed to the feeling experienced through societal contexts.

These conditions, moreover, are indicative of how they perceive themselves through their respective understandings for distinguishing their community and those communities outside. Throughout this second finding there are two emergent themes that present themselves collectively among the participants. First, the nature of perceptions regarding community and struggle to meet individual needs and social uplift. And the way the participants' reflections of a common struggle among community members reflect a growing double consciousness that reveals their political identity development. As shall emerge through Finding 3, these are dynamic processes that also include a level of resistance exhibited by the participants as another indicator for their respective political identity developments.

Finding 3: Political Activism through Forms of "Double Consciousness"

At this point of the exploration, another theme has emerged from the meaning of political activation and resisting the social struggles of one's community. Said another way, the reflections of the participants present a degree of recognition, and expressions to proclaim the morality of Black folks. The theme being a common negative perception among the participants of themselves as being immoral because they are young adult Black men; some degree of internal conflict influenced by such feelings of immorality. This theme of social struggle, moreover, consists of an undercurrent of double

consciousness. DuBois (1897) recite a classic statement from DuBois that speaks to the nature of the phenomenon of double consciousness. As they recite:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, —this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (p.1)

Walker (2019) elaborates upon the phenomenon of double consciousness as a logical statement based from the human quality of prejudice. He explains the DuBois' conception of double consciousness as:

A state of confliction felt by an identity group, X, struggling with a prejudiced definition of what-it-is-to-be X given by a contemptuous oppressing group, Y. This definition can be hateful, shaming, or contrary to how X perceives themselves but results in a sensation of duplicity that entails internal strife. (p.122)

The data reduction and analysis, therefore, was tempered toward seeing if, and if so how, the participants expressed needing to see, or attempting to represent, themselves as moral beings. Nelson's reflections, as a starter, revealed a perspective by which he questioned his moral identity was represented through his stating that "not all Black people are bad" (Nelson 2, interview, line 43). When asked to clarify what he meant by "bad," Nelson explained that "We're not out here to put ourselves in situations like to be involved in drugs or crime" (Nelson 2, interview, lines 47-48). Taking a pause at this point, Walker (2019) would suggest that this reflection is an exemplar of the features of double consciousness. Invoking DuBois, Walker (2019) explains that these features are "the 'peculiar sensation' of 'always looking at one's self through the eyes of others', and

‘measuring one’s soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (pp.117-118).

Now, when Acey was asked to imagine himself in the same situation as was just asked of Nelson, moments of preservation or concern for his well-being such as this, Acey mused, “who knows if you can say anything and get a response” (Acey 3, interview, lines 66-67). Similarly, Jason advised that “I would say that I’m not the stereotype of thug or violent person that you think that I am. I’m not trying to cause you any harm in any type of way and I really just want to continue on with my young life” (Jason 2, interview, lines 73-75). Each participant reflecting identities of “internal strife” contributed to by perceptions of how he is viewed by others.

In the very first interview of the study, Acey mentioned discussing the Trayvon Martin tragedy with family members when it occurred. Acey was summarizing how he and his family discussed current and political events. Within this summary, he explained that “(Barak Obama’s election) was a big one of course, for the African American community” he included that “we definitely talked a lot about that (Obama’s election) back then especially with situations when it came to like, police brutality with Trayvon Martin and things like that” (Acey 2, interview, lines 96-98). Acey went on to explain that “those conversations were had, especially with me being such a young black male in this day and age. That conversation definitely came up a lot. It still does, sometimes” (Acey 2, interview, lines 98-100). Acey’s response brought in context of his responses illuminate two subjects, police brutality as reported against young Black men and of “the talk” that family members of my own as I was growing up. The talk is well referenced by Googling “discussions about black men and the talk about how to deal with police.”

The “talk” to which I am referring was instruction on how to behave if pulled over by the police; basically, the young Black man is instructed to keep your hands on the wheel and answer all questions politely, etc. The need and existence of this reflected tradition evidences the intergenerational mechanism of double consciousness by Acey as a young adult Black man. Acey’s last response prompted a follow-up question to the participants toward exploring how information is attained. The first response was received from Jason and was initiated by my asking if he had ever directly been talked to about how to engage police, and if so to describe the situation(s), with who, and about what age(s)? Jason replied,

No, I have never received a talk about how to deal with the police if engaged. As an African American male about to move forward in the world into my career, I think it would be helpful to learn about how to deal with the police. (Jason 4, interview, lines 1-2)

With the Trayvon tragedy in-mind, and toward exploring participants’ responses for insights into their indications of immorality, the data reduction process led to a question specifically concerning that incident. The question included asking the participants to put themselves in the position of Trayvon Martin. The exchange with Nelson is the first to be revisited. The exchange with Nelson was as follows:

Interviewer: Last question. I don't know if you recall, few years back, the Trayvon Martin issue and then of course, the subsequent issues like that that type of thing. I know it might be difficult to put yourself in that situation, but, if you were in that situation and you have something to say to the officer, what would you say?

Nelson: I would just remind them that not all black people are bad. Just lighten up a little bit.

Interviewer: [chuckles] All right. I like the way you simplified that bit. I appreciate that. [laughs] Just one follow-up. When you say "bad" what do you mean by "bad"?

Nelson: We're not out here to put ourselves in situations like involve in drugs or crime. (Nelson 2, interview, lines 43-48)

Nelson appears to be conveying that he would try to convince the officer that not all Black people are involved in drugs or crime. Additionally, Nelson, through “(reminding)” the officer that not all Black folks are involved in drugs or crime but the officer shoots anyway. Now, when presented with the request to place himself in the position of Trayvon, Jason responded by saying that “I’m not the stereotype of thug or violent person that you think that I am. I’m not trying to cause you any harm in any type of way and I really just want to continue on with my young life” (Jason 2, interview, lines 74-76). However, Jason provides another dimension to the nature of his political identity development. Within the context of his responses, Jason provides that “It’s not enough to point out problems and not offer solutions for them. You got to now put the work in” (Jason 2, interview, lines 57-58). In context, Jason conveys from a position of resistance that it is not enough for him to be aware of pervasive social contexts or problems, he feels that he must do something to address them. And then there is Acey’s response. When Acey was asked to put himself in the position of Trayvon he advised that

It's really hard to think of words to say to change somebody's mind when they already had that preconceived notion of who they're going to be. So, even when possibly, you know, I might live around or I’m here with my parents like he was or I live here in this area, you can say all these things but if somebody has that preconceived notion of "You are this type of person based upon how you look, how you talk, how you walk," any of those factors, who knows if you can say anything and get a response. (Acey 3, interview, lines 61-67)

Acey’s response adds a complicating dimension to this negative understanding by others of him as a young Black man. A dimension of an inability to overcome the knowledge of social condition that he has in situations of preservation. So, if Acey is in the position of getting an officer to not shoot him if simply walking down the street, the

“preconceived notion” of the officer, an agent of the “outside” community, provides little to no possibility to convince the officer. Emergence of this complicating dimension reveals something about Acey’s political identity development. More specifically, in context, Acey included that “I did do further research on that case and just based act on that, it is completely, that it had, there was a lot of serious hyping in there” (Acey 3, interview, lines 56-57). In context, Acey clarified that there was a lot of information and coverage of event, so, he took it upon himself to cut through the noise and verify information for himself. A perception that this type of struggle has been experienced as political identity phenomena produces wonderment for further exploration into indicators of actions taken by the participants, if any.

A struggle between “indication” and “instruction” in political activation.

Acey, in his response to the Trayvon question indicates a form of political action taken by him in form of research into the reporting of the incident. As introduced in his response, pretext provided by Acey warns that “there was a lot of serious hyping in there” (Acey 3, interview, line 57) to the story of Trayvon Martin. Acey advised that his parents discussed the Trayvon Martin situation around the time that it was in the news (Acey 2, interview, lines 96-100). Given the context of the exchanges with Acey, he was advising that his response is reliant upon the implication that his knowledge of the situation is based on verified information, or “a lot of serious hyping.” Similarly, Jason indicated the need for a level of verification in his first interview.

In Jason’s case he was asked if he discussed current and political events with family members. As he stated, “Me and my dad used to have side conversations [crosstalk] but I never took those conversations seriously because he was just radical.

Sometimes I felt like he didn't know what he was talking about” (Jason 1, interview, lines 16-18). More telling was his explanation that “Like (for his dad) to say stuff that didn't make sense because I know he didn't have-- He only had the high school degree” (Jason 1, interview, lines 23-24). Jason held little regard to social matters when explanation was from his dad. Nelson also seemed to show a need for verification through advising that he needed to be convinced which side he stood on, as presented in prior findings.

Earlier in the interviews, Acey was asked about where he gets his knowledge of current events. As far as an indicator of his political identity development, for Acey, there is a need to verify information that he was exposed to. He answered that his knowledge of current events comes from “Most of the time, social media.... Mainly Twitter” (Acey 3, interview, line 6). A take-away is that current knowledge of social conditions is predominantly influenced by social media. Recalling Acey’s distinction among communities earlier, ‘outside community’ (e.g. institutions; social media) and ‘his community’ (e.g. folks on his ‘team’ with common political conditions and social struggles).

The line of distinction among communities and engagement with social media tends to be greyed, rather than black or white, when considered in the contextual terms ‘team roles’ of ‘indication’ of social condition and ‘instruction’ for acting given a level of meaning-making and understanding of given social conditions as a source for instruction toward acting politically. Reflections by the participants’ association with Twitter as a main source of social content indicate a connection to young adult Black men being reported in the news feeds in terms of being shot by law enforcement predominantly. The connection being the components of ‘the political’, or helping others found to be

similar to himself, with similar struggles, seeking indications and instruction to address pervasive social conditions, among the participants and those young men being reported within the news feeds.

As understood through the collective responses of the participants, the influence of social media would be a part of the afore defined outside community as a source of “indication” of institutional and societal structures. Expanding this consideration of distinction in “indication” and “instruction,” when Jason was asked in his follow-up interview how does he stay up to date on current events, his response was like Acey’s. Jason advised that he stays up to date on current events through “TV a lot, but also on social media - especially Twitter” (Jason 2, interview, line 41). Jason advised further that he gets updates on current and political events from a Twitter feature called Moments; he even voluntarily screenshot that particular days main page to me. The page consisted of the first four headlines, two of which related to race: Police fire dozens of bullets at a car in Walmart parking lot, killing the driver (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/walmart-police-shooting-black-man-unarmed-car-california-barstow-a8308986.html>) and Black men arrested at Starbucks say they feared for their lives (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-19/urgent-men-arrested-at-starbucks-say-they-feared-for-their-lives>).

The idea of source of instruction to counter the negative effects of social conditions, or effects of features of double consciousness, conveyed through sources of “indication” prompts continued reflection back upon the participants. However, the degree to which social media is engaged seems to be indicative of either instructional (i.e.

engagement within his community) and indicational (i.e. engagement outside his community or society in-general). Does this lens of distinction between inside and outside community engagements of instruction and indication reveal new perspectives and insights into the perceptions of social conditions by the participants? If nothing else, there is at minimum an indicator that all ‘politics is not just local’ but also socially relative and that social media expands “their” respective communities.

At this point, there is wonderment as to whether there is relationship among preconceived notions of social conditions and the moral standing of individuals held by folks like law enforcement, feelings of being immoral by the participants, instruction about how to behave in society for the participants, and indication for interacting in society for the participants, and their relationships to inside and outside communities. I’ll call these participant perceptions of community perspectives. To investigate whether such relationships exist among these lenses for the participants, another review of the response was conducted with these indicators as the lenses.

The implication for the existence of these lenses of consideration is race, which set the table for investigation into the participants’ specific references to race as a source for a relationship among the lenses. There were two responses from Acey that indicate race as a factor. The first being Acey’s explanation of his early home and family life by describing his community (Acey 1, interview, lines 3-22). The other is his use of the terms African American and Black in the description of social engagements (Acey 2, interview, line 99). Acey used the term “Black” only once and that was as he described himself when referencing Trayvon Martin in a response, and African American for the six other references. Jason, however, only uses the term “Black” despite the

circumstance and Nelson used the term “Black” (Nelson 2, interview, line 43) only once and African American not at all. Jason used the term “Black” when referencing the men who are influences for him throughout his life (Jason, interview, lines 47-63). Given that race is prominent in relation to identity in the literature, I turned back to the responses for additional understanding of participant perceptions.

As I reflect upon the interviews for contexts of race, I went back to the responses for evidence of deeper understanding. In doing so, I was reminded of what seemed to be an odd response at the time of exchange with Acey. The very first request of Acey in the interview process was to tell me a little bit about his family and home life as he was growing up. I expected that he would respond by immediately describing his family, mother, father, and or sibling(s), etc. Instead, Acey responded by describing his community and neighborhood including socioeconomic class and ethnic descriptors of families, only after this description did Acey then discuss his immediate family (Acey 1, interview, lines 12-14). Through describing his community, Acey advised that he lived in a “pretty suburban area (with) a lot of mixed families and a significant number of ethnic backgrounds, things like that (and) other children my age in my neighborhood” (Acey 1, interview, lines 6-11).

So, in this context Acey ties the conceptions of community, neighborhood, and family make-ups play into the meaning-making of the use of these terms interchangeably when families in his “neighborhood” are described as “mixed families.” Playing into these meaning-makings would be the instruction provided through “his” community as distinct from the indications from the “outside” community, like certain social media engagements. An understanding that ethnicity is a term of meaning for Acey’s

community adding something to how Acey perceives social engagements through use of certain terms. Knowledge of the use of these terms are further indicators of political identity development. Jason and Nelson did not open their descriptions of home and family life interchangeably with their understandings of neighborhoods and communities. Jason and Nelson's responses were more expected as their answers initiated with some form of immediate family description (Jason, interview, lines 7-10; Acey, interview, lines 4-9). The immediately identifiable difference between Acey and the others is the structure and socioeconomic status of their families as they were growing up. For reference of comparison, Acey lived with his biological mom, dad and sister through high school in suburban neighborhoods. Jason lived with his dad and stepmom first in a suburban area, and then with his biological mom in a low socioeconomic urban neighborhood. And Nelson lived with his biological mom and siblings in a low socioeconomic urban neighborhood.

At approximately age 10, Acey and his family moved to another self-described suburban neighborhood that was "mainly around a lot of Caucasian people. But nonetheless, there were still people of other backgrounds in my neighborhood still today" (Acey 1, interview, lines 20-22). The phrase "mainly around a lot of Caucasian people" recalls a statement from Walker (2019) explaining that "Black Americans who find themselves in frequent contact with white Americans are far more likely to become victims of double consciousness, since double consciousness requires contact with whomever defines the second self" (p.120). The theme here for Acey is consistent in descriptors of his community in terms of ethnicity and the socioeconomic status of that neighborhood. Jason at some point lived with his mom. Like Acey, Jason describes his

immediate family make-up along with his neighborhood in terms of socioeconomic status, along with experience of moving at some point. Difference being that Jason moved to live with his biological mother about age 10.

Nelson only describes his immediate family make-up when asked about his home and family life. Nelson never mentioned having moved, but like the other participants, he also described his home and family life including terms of socioeconomics, living with welfare benefits, etc., as presented previously. So, each participant has perceived and understood their respective home and family experiences through the socioeconomic phenomena of their neighborhoods. The context within which Nelson includes the statements explaining that he feels he needs to learn how the world works for him to exist and assist others because it is where he lives (Nelson 1, interview, line 70-73; Nelson 2, interview, lines 12-19) exemplifies his positionality in relation to political identity development.

Contexts of socioeconomic status are common among the participants while references to race are implied intermittently. More specifically, references to race are used as descriptors to social phenomena and not when referencing or describing themselves. Before considering Jason and Nelson's uses of these terms, I will begin with the exploration of Acey's use of each term because when each participants' responses are analyzed for use of either the ethnic descriptor of "Black" or "African American," Acey used the term "Black" once during the interviews.

Altogether, Acey used both terms a total of seven times and, proportionately, 17 for every 1000 words in exchange (7/4117). The use of the term was prompted by my

asking Acey, as he was growing up, did he and his family members discuss current events or anything “political.” In response, Acey explained,

So we definitely talked a lot about (Obama’s) election back then especially with situations when it came to like, police brutality with Trayvon Martin and things like that. Of course, those conversations were had, especially with me being such a young black male in this day and age. That conversation definitely came up a lot. It still does, sometimes. (Acey 2, interview, lines 96-100)

In the context of this passage, Acey used the term, Black, in comparing himself with Trayvon. Moreover, this comparison is in terms of a tragic situation concerning a “young black male.” As I make this statement, I think about Acey’s response in the follow-up interview when prompted to speak more about the Trayvon situation. The following quote was visited earlier but as a reminder Acey was asked to tell me what he would say to the security officer to keep him from shooting him if he were Trayvon in that situation. Acey advised that “if somebody has that preconceived notion of ‘You are this type of person based upon how you look, how you talk (or) how you walk’” (Acey 3, interview, lines 65-66). So, a quick synopsis is that Acey used the term “Black” to describe himself in comparison to another young Black male in a tragic situation because of a preconceived notion believed to be held by that officer. But does this influence of preconceived notions being held by this agent of society mean anything in relation to Acey’s use of the term “Black” as opposed to the term “African-American”?

Again, as presented earlier in this section, Acey used the term African American a total of six times throughout the two interviews. A review of those six times revealed two general conditions for their use. Those two general conditions were: 1) in describing himself on two occasions, and 2) when describing a preconceived notion of a social condition on two occasions as well. The first reference to himself was he and another

person being “the only African Americans in (his high school) class” (Acey 2, interview, line 54). And the other being his mention of being “the first African American in my school’s history” (Acey 2, interview, lines 59-60). Referencing its use in context of preconceived notions, Acey used the term in stating that he was “an African-American doing positive things instead of someone on the news, in jail, anything like that” (Acey 2, interview, lines 194-195). And the context for the other use was “when there is so much negativity when it comes to African-Americans whether it be a male or female” (Acey 2, interview, lines 197-199). Given these determinations, there is no clear distinction for Acey’s use of either term. So, for Acey, the reason for use of each term is unresolved but the preconceived notions and the respective social conditions to which they relate remain. The analysis then moves to Jason.

Now, Jason only used the term Black as an ethnic descriptor throughout his interviews. In total, Jason used the term, Black, twelve times or at a proportion of 34 times for every 1,000 words in exchange; roughly twice as often as Acey. And Nelson only used the term “Black” once at a proportion of 5 times for every 1,000 words in exchange; roughly 1/3 that of Jason. The only shared social artefact and identity input with Acey is that of preconceived notions. Jason adds a dimension of perspective to the use of these ethnic descriptors proportional use. Rather than illustrating his perception of how others in society see him as immoral, Jason reveals a preconceived notion of his perception of “white people.” The context within which Jason presented the notion was slightly different by referencing the recent election of Trump. As Jason stated,

I don't mean to sound any type of racist. I think white people are scared....They went all in because they were on the verge of completely collapsing and the social dynamic of this country was on the verge of changing. And white people were upset because it wasn't changing the

way they wanted it to change because a black person was doing it. (Jason, interview, lines 180-187)

As presented, considering the perspective before of the preconceived notion where Jason has perceived being seen as immoral by folks in society, Jason now explains his preconceived notion of “white people” through a political lens. Here the preconceived notion for Jason is the belief that “white people are scared,” but a question becomes scared of what? For Jason, white people were scared because the country was changing “because a black person was (changing) it.” Could this preconceived notion of Jason that white people are scared that a Black person is changing the country, presumably President Obama, be related to Acey’s preconceived notion mentioned previously where he conveys the wonderment that “who knows if you can say anything and get a response” (Acey 3, interview, lines 66-67) to keep Zimmerman from shooting him as Trayvon?

In the second interview, Jason stated that “we still don't have enough black people sitting at the table making decisions” (Jason 2, interview, lines 28-29), more context was provided to focus what he is trying to convey. Jason added that “we still don't have enough black people at the forefront of white politics sitting at the table, and you still got segregation with the help from the government and neighborhoods and hoods still being segregated” (Jason 2, interview, lines 32-34). The preconceived notion, in sum, is that there is a need for more Black folks to be involved with “white politics.” At this point I continue with an exploration of the participants’ responses related to seeking indication, specifically, that may also shed deeper understanding for the dynamics of these perceived social conditions.

Picking back up with Jason provides a further dimension among these perceptions of social condition. There exists an intergenerational nature to these feelings of detrimental social conditions, of double consciousness, and need or expectation that there is leadership to assist those of his community in providing instruction and representation toward addressing those conditions. References to generational leadership in relation to the need for his community to have instruction and representation is relevant because earlier in this discussion (Jason 1, interview, lines 70-163), Jason initiates his explanation for other influences through harkening back to his experiences in life. During the exchanges, Jason explained the experience of detrimental social conditions. These conditions are believed to be the institution of education and labels placed on residents in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. And, Jason clearly presents his position pertaining to political activism and political identity development to address these conditions. As he states,

like I said, I stay with my dad and my stepmom. Early on in my life, I stayed with my mom who lives in what people would consider as the ghetto part of (New Augusta), and so I had seen as a kid, first hand, what it was like to live in the struggle and had to have the odds stacked against you. And like I've seen families tear apart up. Torn apart. I've seen some just really crappy shit, I went to a crappy elementary school. I knew that somebody had to make a difference, and it has to be somebody that looks like us to make a difference because, if not us then who? (Jason, interview, lines 73-79)

And he exemplifies his concern with the current state of a generational need for instruction when he advised that,

The closest thing that we have as a leader is Colin Kaepernick. He doesn't have a level of influence that he can really get people to do that he hasn't met yet. I feel like if I can influence the people around me and do the work around me that is good on a smaller scale. (Jason, interview, lines 153-156)

A takeaway from the collective context of these exchanges conveys that this social condition, including all distinctions, has persisted for generations and that Black leadership is still needed to address detrimental social conditions in the minds of the participants. Additionally, the context of the exchanges now includes civic and political mindsets to help others of their community. Mentioning Colin Kaepernick as “the closest thing that we have as a leader” by Jason conveys that Black folks continue to “live in the struggle (and) have the odds stacked against you.”

At this point and given the main objective for the dissertation being to gain knowledge of young adult Black males’ perceptions of political activism, is there additional insight provided by distinctions of the social condition that play into the identity systems of the participants’ processing of civic or political activism? To move forward in this exploration, I take these distinctions of detrimental social conditions among the participants’ responses and explore to what extent there are influences of their respective ideals of politics, the role of social media, and institutional maintenance of detrimental social conditions.

An intergenerational maintenance of double consciousness.

Continuing with the context of the need to address double consciousness as experienced by Black folks, Jason provides a reason why this is important. When asked why this was important, Jason explained that

our generation doesn’t have anybody that is leading our generation. It's so important because our generation doesn't have a leader. Like the people that are leading the black community like Al Sharpton, all those people are not in our generation. The millennials don't really have anybody to look up too. (Jason 1, interview, lines 144- 152)

The intergenerational nature of detrimental social conditions presented by Jason opens a perspective through which to explore an existing need to address these

conditions. Moreover, Jason exemplifies characteristics of his political identity development that instruct him that something needs to be done in terms of how he and other millennials experience these conditions today. In other words, Jason seems to be saying that conditions are the same, how they are experienced by his generation is different. And so, the political nature, the how to help others in their community reciprocally, is different. The perspective of politics for the participants is summarized through the analyses and findings through this point.

For the participants, politics has foundation in the reciprocal nature of helping others of their respective communities. Distinct from those not of their communities, those who are of their communities, as distinguished by Acey earlier, are understood reciprocally provide instruction and guidance to counter social conditions that are detrimental to their advancement in society. Generally, these detrimental social conditions effect the thinking, behavior, and identity of the participants as young adult Black men in a negative way. However, as Jason has revealed, depending on the generation from which the instruction or guidance is coming from, young adult Black men accept that instruction or guidance at different degrees. For example, instruction or guidance to address why young adult Black men are perceived to be immoral simply because of “how they look, talk, and walk.” This condition is intergenerational and has conveyed the expectation that leadership is required to continually represent them to counter these conditions. A question becomes, what is the nature of these conditions that allow for intergenerational conveyance, effects on the identities of the participants, and upon the perceptions of the participants? To gain knowledge into why it makes a difference from whom information is being received by the participants, I went back to

the participant reflections where they indicated seeking instruction and guidance given their respective experiences with detrimental social conditions through exposure to current events and politics.

Initiating with Nelson, when asked to tell me whether he discussed current events, or anything related to politics as he was growing up, he advised that he did so, initially in what would be his sophomore year of high school with a couple of friends. An immediate follow-up question for Nelson was what got them engaged in those initial discussions? Nelson advised that “it was mainly (the 2016 Presidential Election) or the past election. A lot of stuff had been going on in the world.” He added that “(he) was clueless about the conservatives and liberals, and stuff. I just found it really interesting” (Nelson, interview, lines 18-21). The subject of the 2016 Presidential Election was common with the responses Jason and Acey. The term “stuff” in the context of Nelson’s response, however, was compelling given the current exploration’s lens of their respective experiences with current events and politics. A quick survey of my recollection for how the participants came across their knowledge for what was going on in the world, two sources that most immediately came to my mind were through their school experiences and through social media.

In the second interview with Nelson, I asked him how he keeps up to date on current events? He advised that he kept up with current events through “social media (which) plays a big part. That's where you get online information from” (Nelson 2, interview, lines 25-26). Earlier in this finding section, Jason responded to the same question with “I look at TV a lot, but also social media is a key, especially Twitter” (Jason 2, interview, line 41). Similarly, Acey explained that he stays current “Most of the

time (through) social media, mainly Twitter on my phone. I pretty much have notifications from different websites such as The New York Times” (Acey 3, interview, lines 6-7). While reviewing the transcripts revealing the common response of social media prompted my communicating with the participants again. I wanted to explore the relationship between their exposure to social media, their beliefs, and their perspectives of social conditions. This time I texted each participant asking them to respond to me via email. I asked each participant to tell me the top ways that they access or receive political news via social media. The first to respond was Nelson.

Nelson responded by advising that “The main resource I use for news is social media” (Nelson 3, interview, line 10). I followed up by asking Nelson “Do you mind telling me what or who you “follow” on Twitter to receive political news, Nelson” (Nelson 3, interview, lines 12-13)? Nelson responded with The Young Turks (Nelson 3, interview, line 15). He later advises that he learned of this feed by a YouTube ad (Nelson 4, interview, line 5). The Young Turks Twitter feed consists of tweeted news stories internationally. The stories range from sports, to popular and political subject matter.

When I pulled up The Young Turks online, on April 19, 2018 at 10:28 a.m., out of the first twenty tweets there were ten that were related to politics or had a political theme. The third tweet was State punished city of racist monuments and Republicans make car loans racist again is another within those first twenty. And four of that same twenty had the subject of Donald Trump. An example of the subject title was Republicans want DOJ to prosecute Trump Opponents. The opening story line was Republicans put the creep in creeping fascism. So, if Nelson was to access the site at this time, he would potentially translate the social condition given these tweets with main

topic contexts being race, political party, and Donald Trump. Political party reminds me that one of Nelson's responses in Interview 1 was that he "was clueless about conservatives and liberals" (Nelson 1, interview, lines 20-21). The next participant to respond was Jason.

Jason advised that "Twitter has this amazing feature called Moments this feature let you look at all the trending new that's happening in the world. It even breaks it into categories of sports, political etc." (Jason 3, interview, lines 14-15). In a later interview, I followed-up with Jason to ask how he became aware of Moments feed. Jason advised that he became aware of the Moments' feed by an ad stating that there was a "big update" (Jason 4, interview, line 4) and he simply clicked it to add the feed. Now, Moments' feeds are like the Young Turks' feed except the stories within Moments are direct source. The main page of Moments consists of a mix of popular, sports, and news stories from various sources both personally presented stories and news organizations. Additionally, Jason included a screenshot of the site that had three tweets; all within the past 12 hours of the screenshot being taken. Of the three tweets, two referenced Race. The subject titles were Police fire dozens of bullets at a car in Walmart parking lot, killing the driver and Black men arrested at Starbucks say they feared for their lives. The former includes picture of young Black man in baseball cap. Of the first twenty tweets displayed at 11 a.m. on April 19, 2018, there were two referencing Race and one with the subject of Donald Trump. The sixth tweet was Black men arrested at Starbucks say they feared for their lives. And then Acey responded.

Acey advised that he "just the news app that Apple provides" (Acey 4, interview, line 15). He also included a screenshot from the Top Stories which was North Korea

Removes Major Obstacle to U.S. Negotiations, South Says, from The New York Times.

At the time that I access the Apple news app on April 19, 2018 at 2:21 p.m., the Apple twenty Top Stories contain no headlines pertaining to race and five related to Donald Trump. The main page contains the top four Trending Stories that contain references to neither race nor Trump. The Apple Top Stories posts the headline story from separate news sources like The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, etc., unlike the listing of tweets within the respective sites of Twitter. The Trending Stories work more similarly to Twitter in that the posted stories depend on the number of views.

So, to summarize initial findings for social media influences, each participants' news sources vary. Twitter is common to each but through different source feeds and again to varying degrees. The topic of race is common at the time that the favorite sources were revealed by each participant. This information provides some indication through which further exploration for looking into trends of stories, etc. may be found. However, I wonder how school plays into molding the participants' interest in stories as available within those respective news feeds.

Interview One contained a prompt asking the participants to tell me what they remembered from their school experiences. As I went back to explore their respective responses, I was looking for content for their learning about social condition, race, or politics. While exploring Acey's response, a portion of his response was a recollection from his pre-K school experience. He advised that

I enjoyed it a lot, that was the predominantly African American private school. They did push us a lot and they really made sure that whatever grade we were in, we were definitely well advanced and we should be so it wasn't a problem once we continued to get older and branched out.(Acey 2, interview, lines 19-23)

The balance of his response spoke to his social experiences through high school rather than what he was “learning.” Noticeably, there is a reference to that place being an “African American private school,” whereas he distinguishes from his “social experience” in public-school starting from Kindergarten (lines 23-24). Acey’s response in context is speaking to quality of his learning in his school experience through high school. Interestingly, Jason responded with “I went to a good high school with good resources to a lot of things that helped me prepare myself for college” (Jason 1, interview, lines 8-10). This response, however, was to a prompt to think back to as you were growing up, let's say through high school. Tell me a little bit about your family and home life generally.

Later in the same interview, I asked Jason to help me to understand more about how he came to participate or have interest in community type activities and a portion of his response referred to the quality of his school also. Once again, as he stated, “I’ve seen families tear apart up. Torn apart. I’ve seen some just really crappy shit, I went to a crappy elementary school. I knew that somebody had to make a difference” (Jason, interview, lines 76-78). This portion of his response immediately followed a content reference in a previous finding where he refers to “being in the struggle.” The context then leads back into the theme of social condition as disclosed by Jason in earlier findings. And then a portion of Nelson’s responses provides some perspective for his school experience in relation to politics and social condition.

When prompted to tell me about a typical day for him as a senior in high school, the following exchange occurred between Nelson and me:

Nelson: On a typical day I just wake up at 6:00 AM, get ready for school. Go to school, go through my classes and I try not to be visible, disruptive.

Interviewer: [laughs] I hear you, bro. All right.

Nelson: Basically, just go through the motions, go to each class and pay attention during the day. Some days I have rehearsals.

Interviewer: I agree. [laughs]

Nelson: Yes, on Tuesdays I go to BD PAC after school, BD political action club.

Interviewer: Okay. Excellent. Tell me a little bit about that club, bro. What happens there?

Nelson: Okay. I tell you it's about 20-30 kids in there, but it's run by two other teachers. One is a US Government teacher and the other one is an Economics teacher. We all just sit in class and then they'll throw out a topic, to us, and basically just hear what we have to say about, what everyone thinks.

Interviewer: Got it. Okay.

Nelson: It gets pretty heated sometimes because a lot of people have different opinions, very different opinions about certain stuff. (Nelson 1, interview, lines 50-65)

The context of this exchange reveals several elements of the engaged social conditions for Nelson. Firstly, in explaining a typical day in his current high school experience he presents his involvement in an after-school program whereby political topic are discussed. The balance of a typical day involves his “(trying) to be invisible (and not) disruptive.” And as revealed in an earlier finding, his interest in being involved is linked to his wanting to “know how the world works.” Moreover, through such learning he gains knowledge for how to improve the social condition for his community “because (he) lives (there)” (Nelson, interview, line 73). And in a broader context, this exchange immediately precedes Nelson’s elaboration for his interest in these experiences because “it just lets (him) know how the world works” (Nelson, interview, line, 70), bridged by his advising that his favorite subjects are “U.S. Government and Economics” (Nelson, interview, line 68). Given this exchange and its content, I recall that it is

indirectly related to the current exploration being inquiry into each participants' general request of school experience.

My prompt to Nelson to tell me a little bit about his typical school experience, what he thought about it, and how he thought about it comes right after the exchange about the political action club. Nelson disclosed that his high school experience consists of that experience being "pretty good, because all the teachers that (he has) had (have) been great teachers. They've cared, they've always been there to help whenever (he) needed it" (Nelson, interview, lines 78-80). Now, in considering conclusions drawn from the artefacts presented by Acey and Jason's responses to recollection of their school experiences, Nelson presents interaction with teachers. His presentation speaking to individuals within the school.

Acey and Jason presented an overall experience more broadly in speaking to their analysis as quality of the school as institution. That said, Nelson speaks of the school given the individuals and interactions with them, whereby Acey and Nelson speak to the school as institution and the social condition social condition of their respective communities. Additionally, for some reason, the perception of school experience in terms of social condition comes to mind as I recall an exchange with Acey as presented earlier in the findings. That exchange being Acey's offer that he was the first African American marching band leader in his high school's history.

So, to this point in this third finding, broadly speaking, Acey and Jason's perspective of schooling through high school is based from a different position of meaning-making development, recalling Nelson's reflection that he is at a point of deciding what moral positions to take. Acey and Jason expressed moralities that

evidenced being internalized. This does not mean that Nelson's processing does not include, to some extent, that social condition and race do not play into his processing or perspectives. But, as the reflections of double consciousness revealed, although labels of race may not be prevalent, or even mentioned, there are feelings of inner-conflict and awareness that are consistent for each participant.

Summary: Implications for Policies, Practices, and Norms

The emergent findings and themes presented through the participants' reflections reveal a process that is understood as 'the political'. The political consists of three contiguous activities that can be represented by the following statement: The political represents how a participant cognizes and determines the extent to which he will act to help others of his community to recognize and address social conditions that inhibit their interests. This process consists of 'the political' as the foundation for how the participants come to act in political matters, in conjunction with the identity and moral fiber that the participants' have accepted, and the context of social conditions that conflict with and or inhibit the satisfaction of interests of the participants' respective identities. A social condition that was represented in the development of the emergent findings and themes was the conception of double consciousness.

Porter (2014) advises that "political identity appears to be a powerful construct for predicting adolescent political engagement" (p.252). Toward continuing gaining knowledge about how each participant may be perceiving political activation, implications given the findings and themes will be presented and briefly contextualized. A first implication is an intergenerational social condition that is experienced and perceived by a participant. These experiences and perceptions have developed a feeling

that he needs a contemporary role model to provide instruction. As Jason explained throughout his responses, this leader must have attained a certain level of knowledge and position while also had “walked in his shoes.” He advised, for example, that his influences included his college president and not his own father who had only attained a high school education. The implication contributes to maintaining sociohistorically dynamic and discriminatory social conditions of the white racial frame. The term “contemporary” is perceived differently by each participant as distinguished earlier in this chapter.

The next implication conveys that the participant is acting immorally even as he feels is doing nothing wrong. Heitzeg (2015) refers to such perceptions as a feeling that the participant needs to “correct” social behavior that is perceived to be outside societally established normative beliefs and practices. Feagin and Cobas (2008) call these normative phenomena as “whiteness.” The implication being that political perceptions for the participants as young adult Black men is that they feel the need to adjust their behavior regardless of intention. This implication is a common social challenge among the participants as a potential political act. The term potential is used because each participant provided a different level of explaining this phenomenon as a reason for “helping each other” in their communities, as an indication of their respective political identity development. Porter (2013) finds that political action is related to individual moral identity and the extent to which an individual’s moral beliefs and convictions conflict with a social norm, practice, or policy. Feeling the need to adjust behavior because of experiencing norms, practices, or policies of “whiteness” in society exemplifies consciousness of such a conflict. Walker (2019) would suggest that this

consciousness would qualify as a feature of ‘double’ consciousness. However, the idea of ‘whiteness’ also produces a modified meaning of double consciousness for Walker (2019). The modification will be presented as part of the discussion in Chapter 5.

A third and final implication is the internalization of the societal norms, policies, and practices of whiteness that challenge the participants’ senses of identity. In other words, the norms and practices of whiteness are internalized to varying degrees by the participants thus effecting how they act politically. Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) address the participants’ respective responses that evidence decisions to act based from perceived beliefs or perceived behaviors. The exchanges with the participants involving Trayvon Martin are most directly evident in showing how internalization of experienced phenomena of whiteness effect their beliefs and behaviors. Moreover, when phrases such as “common sense” are used in relation to policies, practices, and norms of whiteness as the standard for societal behavior, these phenomena are reinforced in the minds of these young adult Black men. As the participants conveyed, it was futile to try to convince Zimmerman to not shoot in that tragic situation.

Going into the discussion of Chapter 5, the contexts that are the findings and themes from this chapter will be carried through and drawn from. The overall structure for Chapter 5 will be the three study questions. As stated earlier, the discussion will use and develop the context of Chapter 4 toward addressing each of the study questions toward the sought knowledge for the perceptions of political activation by the participants. And, this process will conclude through discussing the dynamics of power as the thread throughout the process that is the perception of political activation in-light of pervasive and proximal social conditions to the participant.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The goal for this study is to gain knowledge of the perceptions of young adult Black men of political activism. As presented in Chapter 3, the method and framework for gaining this knowledge is through the emergent responses of three young adult Black men as participants in the study. The study constitutes an effort to make meaning from the narratives presented through the reflections of the participants based from the three study questions. The three study questions through which these perceptions are to be sought: 1) How do young adult Black men come to perceive, or view, civic activism? 2) How have these views changed over their lifetimes? And, 3) What are primary social influences on these views of civic activism? To initiate and develop the discussion here, the implications from the previous chapter will provide conversational catalysts for addressing these questions while also engaging the literature.

The conversational catalyst for addressing Question 1 will explore: 1) how the participants perceive politics and activism in terms that emphasize politics as local or relational; 2) political perceptions reflect a turn toward common struggle in concert with the immediate and with the larger Black community; and 3) perceptions of politics concern challenging dominant narratives of the Black community generally and of young adult Black men in particular. Question 2 will explore the emerging feelings of DuBois' idea of "double consciousness" whereby the students develop an awareness of dissonance between a dominant narrative of young adult Black men and the lives that they lead in and with 'their' community. And the exploration of Question 3 through two primarily evidenced influences consisting of interactions with the community and the consumption of traditional and social media. To conclude this chapter, the implications will be

identified through the lens of Lukes' (2005) conception of power. That said, the emergence of meaning-making for politics and 'the political' is a good starting point.

How Do Young Adult Black Men Perceive, or View, Political Activation?

Miller (1980) in his article What Does "Political" Mean? (Miller, 1980) explains that "The nature expressed in each case [of making-meaning of 'political'] is found in only one of the instances. All the others have different natures but with a reference to the nature of the primary instances" (p.60). In other words, each participant has an understanding when presented with the term 'political' but 'the nature' of what they understand 'political' to be is common among them all. Each is different based on their identities and experiences to 'that' point-in-time when reflected upon. That 'nature' of understanding among the participants was based in their helping others in 'their' communities with an expectation of receiving help back. The 'help' presents as forms of social conditions that each participant perceives as a challenge to his self-interests.

As introduced earlier, there are three areas that consisted of the nature of the participants' understanding of 'politics' or the 'political'. A first part of this nature would be that the meaning of politics for the participants is ground in helping others reciprocally (Coleman, 1988). In terms of identity, Ryan and Deci (2017) would consider their assertion that socialization that includes an intrinsic need to belong to a group, in some form, is primary to each participants' development. The term 'reciprocity' was introduced by Acey within his responses in relationship to providing help or assistance. Coleman (1988) suggests that feelings of obligation and expectation are manifestations of the social contexts of social capital are expected in the engagement of social relationships. Scholars like Parham, Ajamu, and White (2011) and Belgrave and Allison

(2014) would add that the suggestion in terms of relational exchange that would feel something like ‘by helping you, you will be helping me because we are Black and can add value to each other because we are of the same community’. And Helms (1990) would cosign that the individual acceptance of a racial identity by identifying with others who are perceived to have a common racial heritage would be expected.

A second part of the process of assigning meaning for the nature of terms ‘politics’ or the ‘political’ is a conceptual component for their understandings of ‘their’ respective community. Miller (1980) notes that “the primary instance of something political, and thus the central and focal meaning of the term, is the political community, the polis” (p.61). The participants make a distinction in their reflections between ‘their’ community and ‘another’ community, however. Community for the participants in this respect are in terms of *gemeinschaft*, or as “individuals who know and care about one another and depend on each other (for) relationships” (Belgrave & Allison, 2014, p.211). As a distinction from community as *gesellschaft*, or relationships merely for the “structured exchange of resources” (Belgrave & Allison, 2014, p.211). A reciprocating characteristic for helping each other within their community (*gemeinschaft*) includes various actions with the intention of advancing their individual pursuits.

A statement from Feagin and Ducey (2019) buttresses this part of the process through stating that “the knowledge carried in these networks includes positive values and perspectives on life, as well as, portraits of role models that buttress identity and self-respect” (p.230). Ryan and Deci (2017) would support this position in terms of the extent to which a participant will internalize social contexts and their identity developments. And the third part of the process involves a role of their community that provides

instruction when engaging challenging social contexts in the advancement of individual and community-related collective interests.

As presented and reflected upon by Acey, and contextualized by all the participants, community-related roles include folks referred to be members of the participants' fictive kinship or his extended family (Belgrave & Allison, 2014; Feagin, 2014). Feagin (2014) advises that "African Americans have taken much strength from their social and cultural heritage, one rooted in extended families and friendship networks" (p.222). Belgrave and Allison (2014) explain that

The African American family is often extended and multigenerational with a cooperative and collective family structure. Historically, participation in extended kinship or family networks has been important to the survival and advancement of African Americans. Included within the family network are immediate family members, extended members, friends, neighbors, fictive kin, and Church members. (p.153)

Ryan and Deci (2017) advise that family networks, as groups considered to be relevant to the participant, are important to the identity development process again through internalization and expressed through behaviors. The need for instruction was expressed by Jason during the exchanges. The context of the reference included a belief that folks of their community are immoral as determined through interactions with social contexts because he is identified Black. Beliefs such as these contribute to the formulation of the participants respective civic and political identities (Helms, 1990; Picariello, 2015; Weinstein, Deci, & Ryan, 2011). Given the emergent understanding of politics for the participants, and toward gaining knowledge of the contributing perceptions of these emerging understandings, what insights do those perceptions, and the implications of the preliminary findings from Chapter 4, reveal through the lens of the study questions?

Porter (2013) explains that civic engagement, or social interaction and influences, produces civic action in individuals through the development of certain attributes. The attributes of civic action consist of a “broad range of civic attitudes, beliefs, interests, skills and behaviors” (Porter, 2013, p.241). The exhibition of the attributes of civic action are indicative of the position that the participant occupies on a continuum of identity development (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). And an individual’s understanding of his political identity is reflected through his “development of personally meaningful political commitments” (Porter, 2014, p.241). And political activism is an outward representation of his civic action through political acts (Erikson, 1994; Porter, 2013).

The combination of civic action and sociological experiences of these young adult Black men in perceiving society is exhibited through their describing reflections that are based from their attributes of civic activism. Responses from the participants contextually reveal these attributes when perceiving and reflecting upon their social experiences. The meaning-making process for the participants’ attributes of civic activism continued from that of determining the nature of the ‘political’. This process revealed indicators of the attributes differently for each participant as an indication of their attributes and identities. A general revelation was that the relationships are fluid continuums of political identity development and tendencies for internalization of social contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Jackson III, 2012; Picariello, 2015). Or as Ryan and Deci (2017) advise, “identities also tend to be dynamic and fluid” (p.385).

Jackson III (2012) explains tendencies of a participant are products of interactions with “the biological and extended family; the Black community; faith-based institutions;

social clubs; schools; and other socializing institutions that carry the uniqueness of Black/African-American culture” (p.41). Acey, being the first interview, was the first participant to reflect upon my questioning about their respective school experiences. Acey’s reflections in context of his exchanges distinguishes between his individual experience in school and what he has absorbed about the experiences of African American folks collectively. An attributional context for Acey is that this distinction was made very early in his school experience – Kindergarten. Elliott (2014) speak to the such a distinction as an attribution to the context of the individual (or self) and the collective in relation to his identity development. He advises that “the concepts of ‘the self’ and ‘identity’, though similar, are not coextensive (since) collective identity gains its power through the establishment and recognition of common interests, built upon forms of solidarity involving struggles over, say, social exclusion (or) class” (p.14). Ryan and Deci (2017) would consider such an experience as a pervasive cultural context for Acey, moreover. The specific reflection containing his being exposed to that experience included his explaining that

...when I first started off to go at school I went to of course when I was really young like toddler-age I did my day-care, but I did start of in a private school (where) I did my pre-school. I enjoyed it a lot, that was the predominantly African American private school. They did push us a lot and they really made sure that whatever grade we were in, we were definitely well advanced, and we should be, so it wasn’t a problem once we continued to get older and branched out when I started kindergarten and moved on from there. (Acey 2, interview, lines 17-24)

The prompt that gained this reflection was, “Okay all right, let’s switch over from home and family to school. Kind of tell me a little bit about what you remember from your school experience through those years” (Acey 2, interview, lines 14-16). The years that were framed in the prompt included, “as you were growing up, up through high

school” (Acey 1, interview, lines 3-4). So, Acey’s identity development process would have been introduced to a social context including “solidarity [as a part of a collective] involving struggles over, say, social exclusion (or) class’ as early as toddler age” (Elliott, 2014, p.14). Acey also explained that “I was social loved interacting with people, even the adults or my teachers” (Acey 2, interview, lines 29-30) which provides dimension for his identity and its development through fifth grade, as the context of the elaboration reveals. Characteristics of the naïvé, acceptance, and resistance stages of BID present themselves given these exchanges also. The resistance stage is included because Acey conveyed being exposed to ‘racist phenomena and manifestations engrained in the societal experience as a restraint to his advancement of self-interests’, as was explained in Chapter 2. But resistance including either of Scott’s (1992) hidden transcript or infrapolitics categorizations were evidenced at this point in his political identity development. The discussion will develop further considering the characteristics of these stages and resistance while answering the third study question later in this chapter.

Later during the same response, Acey explained that he became the first African American drum major while he was a senior. He included that “was definitely one of my biggest accomplishments there” (Acey 2, interview, lines 60-61). Ryan and Deci (2017) would suggest that this statement would be indicative of a positive internalization of this experience. As such, in this context, an identification that as part of his identity on the internalization continuum, his identity acceptance being African American would be somewhere between identification and integration. And as may be recalled from Chapter 4, the use of both the terms “African American” and “Black” at different points in the exchanges could be indicative of dissonance in categorization and identity for Acey.

Authors like Feagin and Ducey (2019), however, would add however that use of the term African American, being a social construct and thus not autonomously categorized, would temper the positioning in that area of integration closer to identification. Ryan and Deci (2017) would also weigh-in that this position would not be stable because there is a degree to which outside influence plays a part in Acey's internalization of this part of his identity.

For Jason, when he was asked "to tell me a little a bit about your school experiences (from) grade school through high school" (Jason 1, interview, lines 28-29; 32). Jason began his reflection with high school including the statement, "in high school I was part of a little high school fraternity. We always liked to talk about politics and state, and world issues and our community, focusing on the community. A lot of projects while in service. Like a lot of voter registration drives" (Jason 1, interview, lines 33-35). His reasoning for joining the group aligns with Ryan and Deci (2017) given their argument that the participants naturally seek a group to align with to satisfy the need for "relatedness" as a required component of basic psychological need satisfaction. Jason would also be somewhere between identification and integration on the internalization continuum given that Jason reflects evidence for his needs for autonomy and competence for interacting in these experiences is satisfied. Recalling Chapter 4, Jason used the term "Black" consistently and per use of the same analyses, Jason would be a bit into the integration area than Acey when considering racial and political identities.

And to prompt Nelson's reflections upon his school experience, he was asked to "tell me what a typical day looks like for you right now (as a senior)" (Nelson 1, interview, lines 47-49). His response began by explaining that

On a typical day I just wake up at 6:00 AM, get ready for school. Go to school, go through my classes and I try not to be invisible or disruptive. Basically, just go through the motions, go to each class, pay attention and then you go to quarantine you day. Some days I have rehearsals, on Tuesdays I go to BDPAC after school, a BD political action club. (Nelson 1, interview, lines 50-56)

For Nelson, his behavior is foremost in-mind when reflecting upon the majority of his school experience, which includes prime identity development time through high school (Obradović & Masten, 2007; Picariello, 2015). Maintaining the analysis criteria for assessing for a level of racial identity internalization, Nelson is different from Acey and Jason. Ryan and Deci (2017) would start between introjection and identification given that this behavior is externally based. And, moreover, Nelson did not use any self-identifying term related to his race throughout the interviews. However, like Acey and Jason, Nelson does evidence a level of autonomous interest in civic and political activism and satisfaction of the relatedness to a group. These associations would offer toward satisfying this psychological need that would put him proportionately closer to identification on the internalization continuum. The process of internalization will be picked back up shortly. At this point, authors like Ryan and Deci (2017), Jackson III, and Scott (1990) would want to speak to the elements of individual identity that play important roles in internalization and resistance of social contexts.

Folks like Ryan and Deci (2017) and Jackson III (2012) would rejoin the discussion to explain that the participants' respective basic psychological needs are linked to also needing intergenerational instruction and his sense of competence and relatedness, and, the pervasive and proximal contexts encountered in matters of the political. Scott (1990) would also include that the process and mechanisms of resistance through infrapolitics, or "discourse that takes place 'off stage', beyond direct observation

by powerholders” (p.4). And that hidden transcripts or “much of the cultural and structural underpinnings of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused” (p.184). Jackson III (2012) would relate the existence of these hidden transcripts and infrapolitics as expressed by Jason (Jason 2, interview), most clearly, as an expression of “anger, pain, hurt, and rage (are shown as an) overt expression of hostility to the existence and effects of racism” (Jackson III, 2012, p.43).

Jason adds complexity to the mechanisms of resistance in his processes related to the political. Drawing again from the content of Chapter 4, Jason evidences that his feelings of competence and relatedness as far as mitigating pervasive and proximal social contexts like racism when he states that “we still don't have enough black people sitting at the table making decisions (or) the forefront of white politics sitting at the table, and you still got segregation with the help from the government” (Jason 2, interview, lines 28-34). Ryan and Deci (2017) and Lawler (2014), perhaps with a topic for future study, would explain to Jason that they have found that government is most concerned with managing the citizenry rather than oppressing it, but the basis of the study’s exploration are the participants’ perceptions. Feagin and Ducey (2019) would argue quite differently is foundational in American policy because it is embedded in the United States Constitution.

Mocombe, Tomlin, and Wright (2014) introduce the aspect of intergenerational instruction and guidance as a role of resistance and that the challenges mentioned by the participants have been embedded into societal norms over history. Feagin (2010; 2014) and Feagin and Ducey (2019) would assign the phrase white racial frame as additional evidence of insights into the participants’ processes of meaning-making of the political.

The white racial frame, as introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, speaks to the existence of societal behavioral norms that are culturally and morally inconsistent among communities of differing ethnicity and race (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Feagin & Cobas, 2008; Feagin, 2019; Stewart, Winter, Henderson-King, & Henderson-King, 2015). These dominant and sociohistorically perduring norms are based from false beliefs that white folks are intellectually and biologically superior to Black folks (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Winfield, 2007). And this frame has been maintained through policies and practices throughout American history (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014; Feagin & Ducey, 2019).

Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) explain that sociohistorically dynamic phenomena persist through policies and practices. As they elaborate, through social norms including certain policies and practices, are “central to the production of social conditions (through) exogenous variables” (p.1). Moreover, the dynamic perdures through normative beliefs sustained through those policies and practices, like the white racial frame (Feagin, 2010; Winfield, 2007). And, as Lukes (2005) would want to make clear in understanding the influence of social contexts and dominant norms, that each participants’ process of meaning-making involves decisions. The dominant norms inflict a power over their decisions within the introjected polarity of the internalization continuum. Resistance by the participant in such positions of decision attempts to reconcile or mitigate conflict between his moral and cultural criteria for satisfying his basic psychological needs.

Wise (2011), in his book *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, provide personal experience that paints a general picture of whiteness, the white racial frame, and its existence as a dominant norm in American society. He proclaims that “As a white man, I am not supposed to speak against and agitate in opposition to

racism and institutionalized white supremacy” (pp. xi-xii). Jason’s statement for “sitting at the table but not being allowed to make what is being served” comes to mind as Wise (2011) would have expressed.

Heitzeg (2015) provides an entry into exploring for effects of whiteness in the decision-making of the participants in matters of the political. The normative belief is that Black folks are criminals to the extent that this norm is dynamic in being a “double standard of deviance and social control” (Heitzeg, 2015, p.197) as a characteristic of what she has labeled whiteness. Use of the phrase “double standard” recalls Acey’s reflecting about “preconceived notion of ‘You are this type of person based upon how you look, how you talk, how you walk’” (Acey 3, interview, lines 65-66) as a reminder of the constancy of this externally regulated part of each participant’s meaning-making processes of the political.

Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight (2011) would adjoin that “During adolescence, identity contestation and clarification become central. It is during moratorium that [racial/ethnic/ cultural] youth become hypersensitive to social messages about inferiority and stigmatization” (p.26). Given these statements, and as evidenced through the participants’ reflection, terms like identity contestation, inferiority, and stigmatization stand out as unseen social maintenance of identity development of folks is in-play through social norms. And that day-to-day social narratives and microaggressions and the influence on the participants through ‘social messages’ and practices of professionals and agents of society (Lawler, 2014; Osanloo, Boske, & Newcomb, 2016).

The maintenance of whiteness as a converging element of the dominant societal norms within the experienced social fabric is reinforced in many ways. Heitzeg (2015)

adds to the maintenance of whiteness as influence on the participants through the phenomenon of double standard. Heitzeg (2015) exemplifies that “the result is double standards of definition and control which medicalize whiteness and criminalize Blackness” (p.197). The normalized behavior of the medicalization of whiteness, in cases of deviant behavior, is exemplified through George Zimmerman’s killing of Trayvon Martin (Evans, Dillon, & Rand, 2015; Heitzeg, 2015; Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011). As Heitzeg (2015) points out, “Five minutes after we knew the shooters identity, he was described as mentally ill” (p.197). The statement represents how a reasoned excuse for Zimmerman’s killing of Trayvon not only medicalizes Zimmerman’s action, it also conveys at least an implied devaluation of Trayvon’s life as a human-being and citizen given my experience through reducing and analyzing the data of the participants’ responses.

The criminalization of Black folks, as a form of social control, is characteristic of the norms of whiteness. In-light of alleged reports of Zimmerman’s being mentally ill, Ryan and Deci (2017) would also bring to the discussion that if Zimmerman was in a state of malevolent aggression, there may be another implication conveyed. They would explain that “malevolent aggression is either a product of strong and often dissonant social pressures or a result compensatory and defensive responses to serious frustration of the individual’s basic psychological needs” (p.639). Is this fact also a variable known to the participants as a factor in their reflective processes to determine what may have been said to Zimmerman to prevent him from shooting Trayvon? If reflected upon as part of that process, moreover, to what extent was there enough power internalized to make Acey feel there was nothing he could have said to prevent the shooting?

Coming to understand whiteness as discriminatory norms in society that have the capacity to effect thinking and behaviors bring to-mind Lukes' (2005) position of radical or dominant power as political influence. Stokely Carmichael, proclaimed that "If a white man wants to lynch me, that's his problem. If he's got the power to lynch me, that's my problem. Racism is not a question of attitude; it's a question of power" (Carmichael, 2018, p.1, emphasis added). Lukes (2005), in sum, provides a point-of-meaning for the conception of power. Power produces a degree of compliance from an individual, that affects behavior because of an imposition or influence. The imposition or influence are social contexts that cause the participant to make a choice that constrains or is contrary to his interests (Lukes, 2005; Mocombe, Tomlin, & Wright, 2014).

Lukes (2005) argues for a relationship between the "real" interests and false consciousness as an indicator of the influence of dominant power over the perceptions and decision-making of oppressed folks. Not only does the dominant power play into how a participant's decisions are made, they each also play into what is understood as "real" for the individual while grating against his moral convictions (Elliott, 2016; Porter, 2013). Essentially, power over an individual occurs because the dominated individuals' rationality for pursuing their interests, satisfaction of his basic psychological needs, are challenged when presented with conflicting social contexts such as the norms of whiteness (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Lukes, 2005).

Lawler (2014) would recall the third finding among the participants that explain a mechanism for how experienced norms exist through "the matrix of knowledge which produces truths about the self and its relations with others [that] inevitably inform the self-perceptions and self-consciousness of people" (p.77). Calling this matrix of

knowledge, the psy complex, Lawler (2014) would quickly relate the ‘truths’ of this matrix as what the participants are taught to be the responsibilities of life that folks are taught like go to school, get a job, take care of your family, etc. And disenfranchising truths are often a choice that must be made. Continuing such choices in the pretense of false consciousness, Lukes (2005) borrows from the words of Susan Bordo when stating that “people know the routes to success in this culture (and) they are not ‘dopes’ to pursue them. Often, given the sexism, racism, and narcissism of the culture, their personal happiness and economic security may depend on it” (p.150-151).

At least two portions of this statement exemplify some insight into how the psy complex was reflected upon by Acey, for example, when prompted to typify a day-in-the-life of Acey as a “resume-builder” for him. And the phrase “There’s also the passion side of me so there’s definitely different things I’m interested in...” Acey is illustrating that there is a distinction made when it comes to pursuing his varying interests, addressing resume builders and addressing “the passion side of me.” The distinction evidencing power over the choices made that raise the challenge of addressing his resume builders or his passions. Later he provides evidence for how he may be conflicted when presented with these distinct interests when he states that folks in his community “light up to see you’re taking that time to come and give them you. Not your services but give them you as a whole. They love it” (Acey 2, personal interview, lines 191-193).

Exchanges with the participants produced individual interests and the effects of social engagement when conflict of interests are presented. Examples of the reflections and effects of such engagements are provided throughout Chapters 4 and 5. Lukes (2005) cites specific political racial links to the effects of socially engaged power through

what he calls recognitional domination. Recognitional domination includes acknowledging that through power mechanisms “millions of (Black) men have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, [and] abasement” (p.120). For Lukes (2005), power effects differently in-part because of cultural relativity, and thus, aspects of culture effect individuals given their respective identities. Resistance to the potential effects of domination need to be addressed at levels of individual identity. Collins and Bilge (2016) speak to identity in terms of intersectionality, as called for in the identity development by Jackson III (2005) later in this chapter.

How Have These Views Changed Over the Participants’ Lifetimes?

The discussion now moves to the second study question, which is, how have these views changed over their lifetimes? However, an answer to this question emerged while discussing the answer to the first study question. The participants’ views over their lifetimes have consisted of coming to understand the political as the extent to which he acquires human and social capital as the acquisition and use of skills and influence: to satisfy obligations and expectations reciprocally among folks of his community; establish, develop, and utilize information channels based on relationships; and a capacity to perceive and address norms, values, and discriminatory social contexts. How each participant was perceiving these norms, values, and discriminatory social contexts is based in the context of the discussion thus far. But there is more to be discussed toward developing an understanding for what the processes were in meaning-making for ‘the political’ for the participants.

The discussion now moves to exploring the participants' reflections toward revealing a process for meaning making and perceptions of 'the political'. At this point, emergent from the participants' reflections is a process of developing their identities and how those identities are making meaning of political activism, or 'the political' over their lifetimes. The meaning-making, moreover, is presented through the social contexts as norms of society with which they continue to encounter. The discussion has developed an understanding of the participants' meaning making of these social contexts through a process comparing and contrasting the differing cultural values among the Black community (and the varying identities within each of them) and what I will now call the dominant community.

The dominant community is the collection of communities that are not each participant's adopted community. Jason's general description of 'his' community is characterized through the context of his stating it being "a gathering of people that's looking out for each other, that's doing things together, that's not just being yourself or just being an 'I', but it's like a team a gathering of people looking out for each other" (Jason 2, interview, lines 45-46). A social capital or value of obligations and expectations with his community is exhibited here. Belgrave and Allison (2014) would support the significance of such a moral position for Jason based from their argument including that "the personal self is indistinguishable from the self that is derived from membership in the African community" (p.100, underline added). As was revealed in Chapter 4, Finding 1, each participant shares the 'helping others' understanding of the political. Given the dynamics of intersectionality as developed while answering study question 1, to what extent depends upon the make-up of each participants' identities

including his adopted class or socioeconomic identity (Collins & Bilge, 2014; Lawler, 2014).

Recalling the responses of the participants' reflections providing contexts for why they have interest in helping others, starting with Acey, the following statement is representative of his ideological perspective. Acey explained that "as a positive person, try to make something of yourself but also try to give it to somebody else. Give it to your team. And to change how everybody's seeing their group of people" (Acey 2, interview, lines 205-207). The phrase "give it" in conjunction with his revelation for helping others was stated as "getting reciprocated back" places Acey in the liberal perspective realm. However, whether his perspective is based toward the social or the economic context polarity is not as definitive at this point in the discussion. Toward providing some direction in assessing non-definitive perspectives, Crawford and colleagues (2016) would join the discussion here to suggest that the perspective from which a participant is processing an inequality is significant.

Crawford and colleagues (2016) argue that social contexts are more divisive than economic contexts when inequality is perceived primarily because the meaning-making process produces tendencies of prejudice. As they explain, "prejudice as negative affect/attitudes and (recognize) that prejudice can be expressed towards (and by) any social group. [And] any group can be a target of prejudice" (p.5). Throughout the exchanges, the contexts of the participants' reflections concerning inequality were in-fact based from social contexts (e.g. Acey 2, interview, lines 205-207; Jason 1, interview, lines 72-78; Nelson 2, interview, lines 36-37).

Crawford and colleagues (2016) would evidence Jason and Nelson's shared perception of their communities throughout childhood are social contexts that create tendencies of prejudice against other communities. Recalling that King and McInerney (2014) from Chapter 1, they would suggest that their explanation for "etic (culturally universal [similar despite culture]) and emic (culturally specific [exclusive within a culture])" (p.175, parenthesis added) is congruent to the production of prejudicial tendencies. They would continue through explaining that this tendency is created "because such targets hold conflicting worldviews that threaten deeply held values and moral beliefs" (Crawford & et.al, 2016) that Jason and Nelson have, and are, developing.

Although overall each participant including Acey share social contexts as a basis for their respective reflections including equality, Crawford and colleagues (2016) would suggest that because Acey's childhood was of a community with higher socioeconomic status than Jason and Nelson there is potential for a different political worldview, and, a level of prejudice among their perceptions and meaning-making. Collins and Bilge (2016) would then suggest that such meaning-making components lend to the significance of social divisions of intersectionality when considering identity development and potential perceptions of individuals despite outwardly perceived categorizations.

Skitka and Morgan (2014) would contribute that the extent to which the participants' communities share cultural and moral beliefs there could be common ground for political perceptions and meaning making of social and economic contexts. Ryan and Deci (2017) would add that the extent to which these

communities sync these beliefs to the individual, the communities political perceptions and behaviors are ‘team worthy’ (see Chapter 4) and toward mutual satisfaction of basic psychological needs among its members. With these distinctions in-mind, and the inclusion of intersectionality in the discussion thus far, contemplation of the participants’ responses now would include the integration of by the participant. The extent to which a participant has internalized a level of prejudice in terms of commonality of the communities’ cultural and or moral beliefs shared with individuals, both etic and emic.

Reinforcing the importance of an internalization of his community with his moral and cultural beliefs, Chaskin and Richman (1992) join the discussion here through explaining that community

is a place of reference and belonging, and the community includes dimensions of space, place, and sentiment as well as of action. It is defined by a dynamic network of associations that binds individuals, families, institutions, and organizations into a web of interconnections and interaction. (p.113)

Belgrave and Allison (2014) present distinct perceptions of types of community in terms of *gemeinschaft*, or the relational connectiveness through “inclusion (of) close-knit neighborhoods,” (p.211) and *gesellschaft*, which “reflects the sense of community based on social interaction for the structured exchange of resources” (p.211). The term ‘resources’ in the contexts of Belgrave and Allison (2014) and Chaskin and Richman (1992) recalls a statement by Jason in Chapter 4 whereas he provides insight into a cultural value placed in community relationships. He suggests that the value lay in helping each other in order to provide ‘something’ that enables each member to realize interests and needs in-light of inequalities. The specific statement is that

Because you got to do the things that you want to be. It's not enough to point out problems and not offer solutions for them. You got to now put the work in because it only takes one person to change the world. Your helping others could change somebody's whole life and that can cause them to change somebody else's life and then it becomes a triple effect. (Jason 2, interview, lines 56-60)

This reflection in terms of where Jason is positioned in a liberal-conservative perspective, is confounded. It is confounded because culturally that his perspective reveals a process, rather than a static position. In other words, as emphasized by the first underlined statement, that first he must help (i.e. act as a 'liberal') in order that another may help one's self (i.e. act as a 'conservative') as emphasized by the second underlined statement. And Nelson's positioning in context indicate tendencies more toward a liberal polarity and perspective of community relationships and his meaning-making of these relationships in his process of identity development. As reflected in Chapter 4 by Nelson, "when I was younger, we were in need of welfare, and it's like we were I guess a model to like not all people abuse it; some people need it" (Nelson 1, interview, lines 28-29). The distinguishing factors for the meaning-making of community and social framework for its interconnectedness continues to emerge toward a thicker collective meaning for community. The participants' explanations for the meaning of "community," was a "attitude" that they needed to look out for each other, in various ways, as members of a community.

Thematically, the general motivation for the participants is that each must look out for each other given social conditions that challenged them as young Black men. The looking out for each other, moreover, indicates a reciprocation through forms of instructional roles and roles of the exhibition between an individual and others in their respective community; or as Jason characterized the roles, being members of a team.

Moreover, this need called for helping each other to challenge the negative perceptions of Black folks that each conveyed through experience and reflection of in their respective societal experiences.

Coleman (1988) would explain that conveyance of perceptions in relation to identity development of the participants is done through information channels. Through the conveyance of experiences, these channels identify the nature of “social relations that constitute a form of social capital that provides information that facilitates action” (p.104). Although Nelson did not explicitly evidence reciprocity as his motivation for helping others within his exchanges, he did imply that any such motivations would consist of meaning-making from knowledge gained from folks. Ryan and Deci (2017) would support this position for the reasons expressed when reciprocity through instruction was explained earlier in the chapter for Acey and Jason. As Nelson explained, “there's sometimes people are put in tough situation that they didn't ask for. The world is not always fair. If someone needs help, I try to help” (Nelson 2, interview, lines 36-37). The context from which this statement was included referenced his experience receiving social benefits through childhood and not receiving knowledge for why folks thought that his family was not working or wanted to receive such benefits. Ryan and Deci (2017) would argue that through Nelson including the reflections including his receipt of social benefits as revealed here, there is evidence of external regulation that has been internalized.

They would input that receipt of social benefits introduces a threat to Nelson's feelings of being economically secure and his feelings of autonomous capacity to counteract. Moreover, they would elaborate through suggesting that Nelson not convey

knowledge for how to engage information channels to gain competence to engage potential solutions. And the extent to which a participant has internalized the economic context of economic inequality, the participant realizes “how inequality affects trust, community life, and violence – and how through the quality of life – it predisposes people to be more or less affiliative, empathetic or aggressive” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.610). As such, his position within the internalization continuum would be within the introjection polarity given these identity influences of economic contexts and information channels.

The importance of information channels to Jason is clearly conveyed. In context of his exchanges including the need for instruction from “Black leaders,” his motivation to help others through seeking information is exemplified through his explaining that “It's not enough to point out problems and not offer solutions for them. You got to how put the work in” (Jason 2, interview, lines 57-58) and not merely recognize but do something about the perceived pervasive and proximal social and economic contexts. Scott (1990) would suggest that this reaction is expected given that it is natural for adolescents, especially, to resist challenging social and economic contexts to their well-beings. As far as where Jason may be positioned within the internalization continuum, he would be somewhere among the identification area and slightly toward integration of the continuum. Although within the exchanges with Jason he conveys that he has access to educated Black men when needed, he also expresses that the Black community needs contemporary leaders (see Chapter 4).

And Acey presents a desire to gain knowledge or information to address pervasive social contexts exemplified through his expressing the existence of negative

“preconceived notions” about Black men (Acey 3, interview, lines 48-67). He does not convey knowledge for how he would specifically gain instruction for resisting, however, throughout the context of his exchanges. Perceptions of pervasive and proximal social contexts such as these would be emphasized by authors like Feagin (2014) and Heitzeg (2015). As an effect upon the identity development of Acey, Feagin (2014) would advise that “omnipresent reality of white hostility and discrimination (that) generates this distressed feeling” (p.223). Given this advisory and the reflections of Acey, there is evidence for external regulations consisting of pervasive proximal social contexts.

However, Acey has evidenced that he has fairly strong informational channels through which he may gain instruction, as was suggested in the last section. That said, Acey would be positioned somewhere among the introjection polarity and identification on the internalization continuum. Steele (1997) and Manly (2005), hearing the suggested effects of external regulations in contexts of discriminatory social and economic contexts upon the identity developments of the participants, would want to interject at this point. But first, Coleman (1998) would want to argue for the relationship of the nature of these regulations as societal norms.

Coleman (1988) establishes an understanding for the complicated role of norms in society in relation to a participants’ identification with being young adult Black men. This complication is exemplified through his adding to the discussion: “Effective norms in an area can reduce innovativeness in an area, not only deviant actions that harm others but also deviant actions that can benefit everyone” (p.105). This statement is to convey discriminatory practices that can inhibit being creative in political situations of young adult Black men, but are inhibitory due to societal contexts, some argue the free market

for example, that are believed to be equally available to all. However, folks like Ducey and Feagin (2019) argue that the history of the free market in America has not been equally beneficial. Steele (1997) would add that conveyance of such knowledge does play a part in identity development of the participants, but more will be said how a little later in this section.

Feagin and Ducey (2019) would continue through stating that the free market, as an economic portion of the overall social contexts of American culture consists of a proximally pervasive context that they call *whiteness*. Generally, whiteness is a sociohistoric carryover of pervasive social contexts of Jim Crow and eugenics. Whiteness is a discriminative normative practice carrying over stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes through social and economic contexts (Clycq, Ward Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014; Heitzeg, 2015; Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, & Motyl, 2016). Walker (2019) would interject his conception of double consciousness here given the social context of whiteness. He would explain that

For an identity group, X, to claim double consciousness, they must be an oppressed group with an oppressor, Y. If Y does not have power (be that political, social, or economical) over X, X cannot claim double consciousness. This because Y's prejudice and power gives them the capability to cause tangible consequences for X. So whites (as Y) would not have a claim to double consciousness even though a definition of whiteness would exist. (Walker, 2019, p.122)

Lukes (2005) would then jump in and cosign with his explanation for the dynamic of power. He would elaborate that Walker's (2019) double consciousness contains the requirement of dominance over a participant when there is evidence of tangible consequence. Erickson (1994) would expose that there is a difference in a participant not only being aware of the dynamics of double consciousness, and perhaps even specific

phenomena like whiteness, but whether he is also aware that his decisions are affected by said awareness as well. Erickson (1994) would then explain that

should a young person feel that the environment tries to deprive him too radically of all the forms of expression which permit him to develop and integrate the next step, he may resist with the wild strength encountered in animals who are suddenly forced to defend their lives. (p.130)

Steele (1997) would extend upon this identity conveyance by Erickson (1994) using the proximal social context of stereotype threat. Manly (2005) would distinguish that stereotype types as a normalized social context, proximal or pervasive, are a first step in considering a participants' behaviors in response. However, individual cultural experiences, behaviors, and attitudes are the significant considerations as the step to engage as an indicator of his identities at that time of response. In terms of individual and his collective group, the Black community, Steele (1997) would interpose that although the extent to which stereotype threat is internalized "from their identification with the domain and resulting concern they have about being stereotyped in it [,]" (p.614) "when the self-esteem of stigmatized group is actually measured, one finds that their self-esteem is as high as that of the nonstigmatized" (p.623). Inspired by James Baldwin, Parham, Ajamu, and White (2011) would convey "to be Black and relatively conscious is to be in a constant stage of rage almost all the time" (p.87). But then Steele (1997), substantiated by Scott (1990) in the background, would re-emphasize the individual participants' self-esteem as a product of a participant's resistance tendencies, given his identity development process and as a member of an oppressed group.

Within Chapter 4, Finding 3, the sections addressing the participants' exchanges in reflection of the Trayvon Martin incident recalls. Specifically, the participants' common conclusion about what they may have said in an attempt to get the security

officer to not shoot his gun. Steele (1997) would make a point to consider his conception of disidentification added to the process of internalization and variations of self-esteem in-light of stereotype threat and resistance. He would explain that disidentification is “a reconceptualization of one’s values so as to remove the domain as a self-identity (but,) as it protects in this way, it can undermine sustained motivation” (p.614) while performing in the midst of a proximal or pervasive social context.

Steele (1997) would associate two statements from Acey that summed up a common message among the participants, with disidentification. The two representing statements that represent this message are that “it’s really hard to think of words to say to change somebody’s mind when they already had that preconceived notion of who they’re going to be” (Acey 3, interview, lines 61-63), and that “you are [presumed to be this] type of person based upon how you look, how you talk, how you walk, any of those factors, who knows if you can say anything and get a response (Acey 3, interview, lines 65-67). Steele (1997) would suggest that these statements represent an internalization of a deficit position of thinking that is indicative of a “caste-like status (through) stereotypes in their societies (that sow) the seeds of disidentification” (p.623). Mocombe, Tomlin, and Wright (2014) had their ears tune-in when the term ‘caste’ entered the discussion.

Mocombe, Tomlin, and Wright (2014) would advise that any consideration of a participants’ identity developments must incorporate the extent to which “white American norms and values” (p.101) have been reacted to by the participant through his reflections and the extent to which sociohistoric references associated to those reactions. That said, they would want to interject that the participants perceive themselves as being a member of one of two castes systems that make-up the Black community. They would

add that the proximal pervasive social and economic contexts are based from “the two dominant social class language games, a black bourgeoisie and underclass, created by the class division and social relations of production of global capitalism or the capitalist world-system” (Mocombe, Tomlin, & Wright, 2014, p.103). They would argue that these considerations are significant because of the need to include the historically sustained effects of intersectionality upon the consciousness’ of individuals and the collective Black communities. Collins and Bilge (2016) have more to contribute through intersectionality shortly.

Picking back up from the contributions of Mocombe, Tomlin and Wright (2014), there is a turn toward positioning the participants on the internalization continuum in terms of the extent to which their consciousness of discriminatory social contexts as norms affects their perceptions. Processing what Steele (1997) would input, how this dynamic may affect a participant’s identity development and perception, it would seem that said effect would be tension-neutral between the external regulation of the disidentifying context and the internal regulation of resistance. Engaging with a consideration for where Acey could be placed within the internalization continuum, in conjunction with the consistent consciousness to the racial portion of his identity and disidentification overall in context, he would be about midway between identification and introjection. Socioeconomics and class enter Acey’s reflections from his first response during his interviews. Although Acey does not speak directly to evidence of influence of caste influence, a slight adjustment toward introjection could be applied to his internalization.

Considering positioning of Jason on the internalization continuum for this area of consciousness of discriminatory social contexts as norms affects their perceptions, his expression of “I’m not the stereotype of thug or violent person that you think that I am” (Jason 2, interview, lines 74-75) conveys a central position of his mindset being a position of defense to external regulations and pervasive social contexts. And, in-fact, Nelson would initiate with similar mindset given his response. These mindsets, in association with a consideration of caste, would start his position on the internalization continuum well toward the introjection polarity. However, adjustments for the disidentification-resistance dynamic would be different, an adjustment for disidentification against resistance tendencies through Jason’s reflections would be slightly toward identification. But slightly more toward the introjection polarity for Nelson as he did not evidence as strong a resistance tendency as Jason through reflections.

What Are Primary Social Influences on the Participants’ Views of Political Activism?

The third and final study question is, what are the primary social influences on the participants’ views of political activation? As has emerged throughout the exchanges with the participants in Chapter 4 - Finding 3, the Trayvon Martin incident was a common social influence. Collectively, each participant expressed the sense that folks in society perceive him as someone to be feared; an immoral person; a criminal. Ryan and Deci (2017) would suggest that the social influences were revealed through their respective reflections as proximal social contexts. Whereas the proximal contexts are exemplified through political structures and economic systems (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

And that the proximal social contexts are exemplified through intergenerational social contexts of whiteness and power as domination.

Skitka and Morgan (2014) would advance the discussion at this point by explaining that each participants' evidenced attitudes, as evidenced through their perceptions of being immoral actors by 'society', are indicative of the effects that social contexts have upon their perceptions of cultural norms. Ryan and Deci (2017), recalling the common references to socioeconomic status by the participants as a reflections including perceptions of cultural norms, would carry the discussion forward through explaining that "pervasive cultural norms or economic structures present 'invisible' or implicit values, constraints, and affordances, which are then reflected in more proximal social conditions and conveyed by socializing agents" (p.562).

Skitka and Morgan (2014) would then rejoin the discussion and advise that the participants' evidenced attitudes are a source of perceptions and effects of social contexts. For Skitka and Morgan (2014), "many attitudes, especially strong attitudes, are linked with other cognitive elements in memory, such as other attitudes, personal values and goals, and concepts of self that makes them relatively invulnerable to context effects" (p.105, underline added). Erickson (1994) would emphasize that given the age of the participants relative to adolescence, the invulnerability of internalized memories and the effects of experienced social contexts are significant. In summation, through a political lens, once an individuals' attitudes, values, goals, and identity are forged by socially experienced contexts, these attributes contribute to his processes of moral conviction and actions related to 'political action' (Christens, Peterson, Reid, Garcia-Reid, 2015; Porter, 2013; Skitka & Morgan, 2014). Porter (2013) would also emphasize that politically

related judgment criteria (i.e. considerations of helping others in his community, while reciprocally seeking instruction for mitigating pervasive and proximal social contexts that limit satisfaction of his basic psychological needs and interests, are simultaneously integrating in the development of moral convictions as part of his developing identities and ongoing perceptions of social contexts.

Porter (2013) continues the discussion expressing that important to understanding the participants' stimuli for moving from thinking about to acting to continue the process of identity expression and moral conviction, she asks, "What makes some people act on their convictions, while others with similar skills, emotions and knowledge do not? Growing research on moral development suggests that the moral self or moral identity can help explain moral action" (p.240). Skitka and Morgan (2014) suggest that the process of identity development emerged as indication of the participants' evolving understanding of the political through his reflections that engage his moral convictions repeatedly over time. Acey's theme of "preconceived notions" (Acey 3, interview, lines 65-66) that affected his understanding and reflection initiating with his reference to Trayvon Martin in his exchanges recalls from Chapter 4. An example of what would challenge the participants' moral convictions are the police action shootings of young adult Black men, like themselves. Belgrave and Allison (2014) inform that

a history of violence and oppression against African Americans in the United States (including the February 26, 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin), along with limited pathways to adequate economic roles for African American males, have contributed to attitudes of hopelessness and lower life course expectations. In-turn, these perceptions contribute significantly to aggression and violence among African American males. (p.491).

Psychologists Parham, Ajamu, and White (2011) add a perspective into the potential effects of such exposure upon young adult Black men with exposure to macro-

assaults. For example, Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight (2011) report that “evidence suggests that black youth recognize the ‘criminal’ stigma associated with their group and also have come to expect negative police behavior” (p.23). As exposure to the multiple police shootings of young adult Black men illustrate for Parham and colleagues (2011), “Macro-assaults are those situational phenomenonons that rise above the level of individual insult or degradation to meet a threshold of collective assault on the people’s rights, humanity, or even their life” (p.83). Recalling each participants’ convergent preconceived notion, Acey as reflected through his stating that “You are this type of person based upon how you look, how you talk (or) how you walk” (Acey 3, interview, lines 65-66). Jason’s convergent preconceived notion being that “I think white people are scared.... They went all in because they were on the verge of completely collapsing and the social dynamic of this country was on the verge of changing” (Jason, interview, lines 180-187). And Nelson’s convergent preconceived notion as represented by his reflection that “we’re not out here to put ourselves in situations like being involved in drugs or crime” (Nelson 1, interview lines 47-48). Osanloo, Boske, and Newcomb (2016) reinforce the importance of the psychological inter-relationship among social contexts of macroaggressions, microaggressions, structural racism, dominant norms and the sense-making of the participant.

Feagin (2014) conveys that “Dealing with racism regularly entails an array of other psychological costs (such as) a rather vigilant, cautious, and/or defensive approach to life is usually necessary” (p.225). Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus (2012) speak similarly to such mindsets as forms of attitudinal hopelessness and dehumanization or feeling less-than in situations of stress when engaged with white folks. Parham, Ajamu, and White

(2011) also argue that “a climate of oppression leaves a residue that impacts the attitudes and behaviors African Americans engage in themselves” (p.84). Such contextual assaults lend toward influencing the participants’ internal and external perceptions and effecting feelings of degradation and insult (Parham, Ajamu, and White, 2011). And Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, and Jackson (2008) reinforce a basis for the existence of these preconceived notions through dominant societal norms include the sense-making criteria for identifying Black folks. They “demonstrate that U.S. citizens implicitly associate Blacks and apes. In a series of laboratory studies, the authors reveal how this association influences study participants’ basic cognitive processes and significantly alters their judgments in criminal justice contexts” (p.292). Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011) argue that preconceived notions of one being perceived in contexts of being criminal would directly be pervasive to the participants’ feelings of relatedness. And would then negatively influence their behaviors when engaging law enforcement agents of societal norms.

Evans, Rand, and Dillon (2015) would join in taking this position further bringing the discussion toward revealing potential implications of convergent preconceived notions on the participants. As they explain, “In social dilemmas, people feel conflicted when they do not have a clear preference and are torn between selfish and cooperative goals” (p.951). As presented in Chapter 2, Wisneski, Lytle, and Skitka (2009), moreover, advise that when moral conviction is the basis for current action it is difficult to come up with conflict resolving behavior in the moment; a finding that confounds cultural difference. Wisneski and colleagues (2009) recalls Acey’s response, and similar preconceived notions from Jason and Nelson, including the feeling that there was nothing

to convince Zimmerman from shooting Trayvon in that moment. They would add that the implication is based from moral and cultural conflict of the participant and the social agent. The relevant nature of this moral and cultural conflicts or dilemma presents a form of power that shall be discussed later in concluding this dissertation (Lukes, 2005; Evans, Rand, & Dillon, 2015).

Implications for the Author Personally; for Practice; and for Policy

As presented earlier in Chapter 2, Ryan and Deci (2017) argue that social and economic systems are linked to what they call “psychological horizons (as the) very possibilities that persons within them can envision” (p.562) of folks. The approach that is adopted to suggest implications given the reflections of the participants will be based from the basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) of Ryan and Deci (2017). The implications will be applied to my personal learnings, for societal practices, for societal policies, and what implications mean for future study. As BPNT explains, the participants’ respective identity formations and satisfaction of basic psychological needs is related to the extent to which he internalizes “pervasive cultural contexts” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.561) from those social and economic systems. Ryan and Deci (2017) provide identifiers for pervasive contexts as may be embedded within the reflections of the participants, for example, “religious identifications, political structures, and economic systems within which proximal social contexts are considered and occur” (p.562).

Personal implications.

Personally, the implications of the study results and given the lens of BPNT include ways to conceptualize and as potential frameworks for the dismantling of pervasive social contexts like racism and Walker’s double consciousness (Walker, 2019).

Additionally, there must be an understanding that these phenomena like double consciousness and whiteness are dynamic processes that engage a dominant power that affects the participants' perceptions and decision-making processes (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Lukes, 2005). Jackson III (2012) advise that societally pervasive contexts like whiteness convey that externally identifying constructs like race, class, and gender make no difference because all folks are equal. Collins and Bilge (2016), speaking of intersectionality implies, then, that each of these social constructs as they play a part in a participant's overall identity is affected by each of these identities as recognized by the participant. They are presumed to make no difference because of messages to reinforce that "we all think we are playing on a level playing field when we are not" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.11). Folks like Feagin and Ducey (2019) have long argued that societal norms like whiteness maintain that this is not the case.

As learned through the process of developing this study, political activation is dynamic process. The process consists of helping others reciprocally who share identity congruent characteristics and common desires to address pervasive social contexts – the political (Miller, 1980). The reciprocation and congruency are defined by the degree to which pervasive social contexts are internalized, commonly among the participants, as threats to his respective basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). So, learning that the participants' perceptions of the political and its activation is related to engagement with socially pervasive contexts, then the proximal components, consisting of what are commonly known as practices, and their contexts play in that process of perceiving as well (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Practical implications.

The implications for these practices link the institutions of society like schools, for example (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As spoken to by Ryan and Deci (2017), for example, creators and facilitators of school curricula must be aware of the capacity for what is being taught acting as a sustaining tool of pervasive social contexts like double consciousness. As presented earlier in the study, such activities may maintain intergenerationally prejudiced policy residences from Jim Crow and eugenics unawares by the facilitator. de los Ríos, Lo'pez, and Morrell (2015) present an argument that individuals resist dehumanizing treatment potentials through education-related prompts. As they state, "From exposure to Ethnic Studies curricula, students are better able to develop a language of critique and possibility; and students of color are far more likely to have access to their histories and a fuller humanity in the educational arena" (de los Ríos, Lo'pez, & Morrell, p.87, underline added).

Another proximally maintained practice is through social media. As presented by authors (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Walker, 2019; Whaley, 2016), the constant access and exposure to narratives through social media. The pervasiveness of social media acts to reinforce negative perceptions that young adult Black men harbor given these constant exposures to negative identity messages conveyed. Noteworthy here is that Parham, Ajamu, and White (2011) advise that continual exposure to negative associations to one's identity maintains its inclusion in one's attitudes and behaviors absent positive nurturing from trusted influence. Continuing a process of thought considering cultural mechanisms of power, Collins and Bilge (2016) argue that "media spectacles and associated events also present important scripts of gender, race, and nation

that work together and influence one another (toward serving) political ends” (p.11). The context of this statement recall an implication that leads nicely into an implication for policy.

Policy implications.

Recalling contexts of the Black Lives Matter movement and the negative narratives as interpreted by the participants implies a need for awareness to this fact, most urgently through media and specifically social media. Administration of news outlets and especially social media outlets should be aware of the effects of material being conveyed through their networks moreover and alter their policies to neutralize the shared negative narratives. Another policy implication is perhaps a need to wrestle with the emerging conflict of governmental policies and free speech liberties and freedoms. In fact, the areas of social media and its influence upon the basic psychological needs and its effects upon the political activation of young adult Black men is an interesting area for future study.

Conclusion

The goal for this study is to gain knowledge of young adult Black men’s’ perceptions of political activation. The knowledge gained was emergent in nature as a novel understanding of ‘politics’ and subsequent conceptions as a process among the participants. The contexts of the study revealed that this novel understanding was a convergent dynamic product of the identity development of each, over time. And this dynamic product in-turn contributes and borrows from his identities, which contributes to what he perceives simultaneously, the ‘political’, ‘politics’, as ‘activism’. The participants’ ‘understanding’ of these terms is a convergence of his experiences with

‘helping others’, ‘community’, and commonly pervasive social contexts to each of them and satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Whereas basic psychological needs are composed of the extent to which the participant is confident in feeling autonomous, competent, and addressing a relevant purpose (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The foundation of the process of perceiving anything related to ‘the political’ is processed in this way. A secondary contributor to the process is the extent to which decisions related to ‘the political’ affected by internalized social contexts, like disenfranchising practices, policies, or laws.

Speaking to the significance of intersectionality and internalization, there are two key statements that serve as portions of the perceiving processes of the participants. A first statement by Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that referencing g positioning of a participant in the internalization continuum, bear in-mind that “identification was a stronger predictor of actual voting behavior [and] when people follow politics because of having internalized its importance, they are more likely to vote and feel strongly about issues than people who follow politics simply out of interest” (p.211). Losier and Koestner (1999) explain that ‘importance’ is the extent to which a topic is relevant to his basic psychological needs at a point-in-time in the process of meaning-making and coming to perceive a social context. The closer to midway of the introjection and integration internalization continuum, a participant position toward the midrange area between the two is ideal as a predictor for positive voting behavior, given all the pervasive social contexts that may coexist for the participant. But what of other political behaviors?

The second statement, provided through Losier and Koestner (1999), suggests a state-of-mind that the participants exhibited with a road sign toward gaining additional knowledge for identifying indicators of his perceptions. As they explain,

[a] central difference between the two forms of internalization is that identification is experienced as self-determined because it represents the adoption of beliefs as committed, personal values, whereas introjection is experienced as non-self-determined because it is characterized by approval-based pressures that result in behavioral regulation based on guilt/anxiety avoidance and self-esteem maintenance. (p.288)

And adding another complexity to perception analysis through explaining that “teenagers who find politics intrinsically interesting will not need to internalize the cultural value placed on political participation. That is, they will pursue the activity spontaneously without having to be persuaded of the importance of becoming politically involved” (p.288). Between the two statements, there is a dynamic being introduced that is a catalyst to the participants’ processes of meaning and decision-making. As part of the meaning-making portions the participant weighs his personal beliefs and culturally conveyed values with those experienced as social and cultural contexts. The decision-making portion of the process is his positioning on the internalization continuum given how relevantly aligned the beliefs and cultural values are in relation to the identification portion of the continuum. Lukes (2005) and Losier and Koestner (1999) would associate this decision-making influence as a form of dominant power to the extent that the social context is not congruent and affecting the participant toward an introjectedly positioned. In other words, the participant has to some degree decided contrary to his personal beliefs and values, thus having proportionately less motivation for acting politically.

Power in the process of political activation.

The social phenomenon of power plays a primary role in how the participants perceive the political and engage the process of political activation. The phenomena of Walker's (2019) version of double consciousness, as presented by DuBois, and whiteness (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Heitzeg, 2015). Feagin and Ducey (2019) would argue that to try to understand these perceptions of the participants in terms of the political is to argue that whiteness is an inter-temporal, or sociohistorically existent, form of normative social control by the majority race in America. And to have knowledge that those perceptions draw power from "racial stereotypes (a verbal-cognitive aspect), racial narratives and interpretations (integrating cognitive aspects); racial images and language accents; racialized emotions (a 'feelings' aspect); and inclinations to discriminatory action" (p.25). Walker (2019) would agree to the extent that the power to create and manifest identity conflict and perceptions of the participants consists of these affective and cognitive proximal social contexts. He would only use the term prejudice to represent each of these aspects and the power that they exude.

Lukes' (2005) conception of power is in evidence when an individual's interests or beliefs as preference is affected to comply with, and be dominated by, the norms of whiteness given the emerged themes from this study. Included in the understanding referred to as social artefacts or objects in Chapter 2, societal norms can take the form of social policy or practice. For example, Acey introduced the phrase "preconceived notion" during his responses as the product of social practices experienced by the participants as produced through societal norms like whiteness or Walker's (2019) double consciousness. Lukes (2005), as inspired by Foucault and Spinoza, advises that "power

meets resistance (and) men have always found that individuals were full of their own ideas, and that opinions varied as much as tastes” (p.151). Scott (1992), for example, advises that historical and contemporary evidence shows that oppressed groups form what he calls “hidden transcripts” among themselves to counter oppressive activities.

Lukes (2005) advises that cultural transmissions can perdure generations through misperceived phenomena. Speaking contextually to a need for intergenerational resistance, Lukes (2005) recites that due to “the assumption of inertia, that social and cultural continuity does not require explanation, obliterates the fact that both have to be created anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering” (p.122).

The cultural contexts of social exchange are commonly a mechanism through which effects of social challenges in-turn affect an oppressed person’s use of language including self-identification (Blanchett, Klingner, Harry, 2009). As disclosed in Chapter 2 of this study, from the work of Jackson III (2012), the components of cultural contexts are based from: *communication/language* as a “body of words and the systems for their use common to a people who are of the same community or nation (Jackson III, 2012, p.38), *philosophy* and *theology*, *customs* and *traditions*, *collective history*, and *family structure*. All this said, oppressed communities have historically used terms and language that differ from the accepted norms of society as a form of resistance and political activism (Scott, 1992).

Given the confession of Wise (2011), the conception of societal advantages being withheld from our participants prompted a re-exploration of the participant responses that reflect potential effects of power. Specifically, in relation to the implication that the norms of whiteness are internalized to the extent of constraining the interests of and or

conflicting with the moralities of young Black men. A response from Nelson stands out when he states that he is in the process of deciding “which side (he) stood on” (Nelson 1, interview, line 28) given his morality. Collins and Bilge (2016) bring a dimension of consideration that adds context to what Nelson disclosed as an indicator of his political identity development, and, the potential effects of power. They advise that “youth had to create their own self-defined identities, an important task for disenfranchised people who consistently have to create meaningful identities in response to stereotypes that are imposed from above” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.120). And so, Nelson’s statement, for example, in context along with Collins and Bilge (2016), substantiate resistance to internalization of norms such as whiteness and its mechanisms of dominant power.

Given the convergent themes from the study, and the perspectives available through the intersectionality of the participants, a next pathway for exploration would be a consideration of potential relationships between the internalization of the social norms of whiteness upon young adult Black men and power over acting against their interests and beliefs. Reinforcing the existing conflict between power and resistance, Feagin and Ducey (2019) advise that exposure to “conditions of oppressive slavery, segregation, and contemporary discrimination (incorporate) important elements of cultural resistance and cultural-framing to white racism (as well as) *forced assimilation*” (p.230) to the norms of society.

On the other hand, Lukes (2005) provides an understanding of coercion as a mechanism of power that conceptualizes internalization of social norms. He advises that “*Coercion... exists where A secures B’s compliance by the threat of deprivation where there is ‘a conflict over values or course of action between A and B’*” (p.21).

Considering this advisory, and the potentials of internalization, whiteness may be perceived and processed as coercion, or it may precipitate resistance from an individual in some form. Given the common response among the participants, I comply to someone telling me to do something contrary to my knowing I have a right not to, so, I do not. Then I am shot and killed. This summation represents what the participants play in their minds if they put themselves in-place of Trayvon Martin which exemplifies these mechanism of power at work.

Lukes (2005) categorizes “influence” as another type of power, like coercion. He defines influence by describing an engagement that “exists where *A*, without resorting to a tacit or overt threat of severe deprivation, cause [*B*] to change his course of action” (p.21). Again, absent an error signal type determination, the extent to which the participants are influenced by social media is absent. However, Lukes (2005) definition does not eliminate “influence” as a potential type of power through social media. The main difference is that social media is charged with merely affecting, not specifically “causing” compliance to, a change in action by a participant. Coercion would evidence of a conflict in value between the participant and the social media message causing compliance to the “value” presented in the conflicting message. In the case of the Trayvon scenarios presented earlier, power is manifest through “authority,” whereby “*A* achieves his objective in the face of *B*’s noncompliance by stripping him of the choice between compliance and noncompliance” (p.22). This type of power, authority, seems to exemplify the common feeling of helplessness or futility conveyed in Chapters 4 and 5. However, a mere observation reveals a distinction between when evidence of “coercion” occurs and when “influence” occurs for the participants. Coercion presents when the

participants were asked to put themselves in a “face-to-face crisis” situation, and, “influence” is potentially evidenced when the participants’ feelings of immorality occur residually through prior reflective experiences. Again, merely an observation.

So, within this effort to gain knowledge about the perceptions of the political for our participants, two questions would provide an entry into further doing so: 1) Is there some insight provided by perspectives of social condition, influenced through social media, and as potential mechanisms of power, that affect identity systems and moral convictions of the participants? And, 2) if so, what type(s) of power? Starting with an exploration into their social media habits because social media was common among the participants as a source of knowledge about current events, each had specific news feeds as a source. Consequently, on the day that each participant advised what specific feeds they frequent multiple times daily, the dominant proportion of the top stories pertained to police action shootings or reference to Black social issues (see Chapter 4). This statement is not conclusive of the “power over” a participant’s decision-making in the advancement of their respective real interests and behavior, but potentially noteworthy none-the-less.

Those respective news feeds provide different topics and from varying sources and social conditions for feelings of conflict and grievance, and, varying degrees of compliance and domination. Those provided conditions engage each participants’ interests, through a political lens, and affects their perceptions and identities, which in turn affect their civic and social behaviours through psychological and social forces, respectively. As presented in Chapter 5, affect upon an individual’s perception and identity calls for an understanding of the intersectionality of the individual. And, that

understanding provides elements of the individual's identity that may present his "real" interests, and evidence of false consciousness, as indicators of the influence of dominant power over the perceptions and decision-making of oppressed individual's identities.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Troy A. Crayton

Education

Ph.D., Urban Education Studies, Indiana University degree, earned at Indiana University
Purdue University Indianapolis

Ph.D. Minor, Sociology, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

M.S., Education – Secondary Education, Indiana University Purdue University
Indianapolis

M.A., Philosophy, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

B.A., Philosophy, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

B.S., Public Affairs – Management, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Professional Experience

2013–Present, President's Diversity Fellow, *Indiana University Pursue University
Indianapolis (IUPUI) School of Education*

Research and studies engaged to develop theory and practices toward learning the identity developments, cognitive processes and perceptions of 'the political' (Miller, 1980) by young adult Black men. The perspective through which these theories and practices are developed are organismic integration theory and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2017).

2014-2017, Channel Director, *Declara* (declara.com)

Strategically recruit, engage, and maintain contributions from education professionals, in fields from higher education to artificial intelligence development, in various professional development communities through discussions, literature gathering, and knowledge transfer. As a Channel Director, I work directly with the CEO and engineers of this international technology platform.

2010-2013, District and School Improvement Officer (Outreach), *Indiana Department of Education*

Responsibilities included monitoring improvement of three of Indiana's largest school districts, charter management organizations, and schools according to federal and state legislative education requirements. Collaborated closely with district superintendents, academic directors, school principals, and team leaders to mutually develop district and school improvement plans based from root cause analyses, respectively. Based on Mass Insight research based findings, developed improvement plan platform for use by peers as well as myself to work with these various administrators.

2006 - 2010, Research Associate/Project Co-coordinator, *Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, The Center for Urban and Multicultural Administration, The Center for Service and Learning and The African American Male Equity Project.*

2003/2012, Adjunct Professor, *IvyTech Community College*; Managed courses in philosophy and sociology.

Presentations

2014, *Toward a Relevant Policy Studies and Civics Coursework for Urban Secondary Students*, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education Colloquium presentation (May 22).

2013, *Toward a Relevant Policy Studies and Civics Coursework for Grades 9-12*, Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Annual Conference presentation. 2012, *Has Anything Changed? Studying the Education of Black Children in Indianapolis*. Indiana University School of Education Indianapolis, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education, Indianapolis, IN. Crayton, T., Bonds, V., Kasaebier, K. (2012, April 4).

2011, American Educational Research Association, Presenter - *Supporting Successful African American Males in Education*

2011, Indiana Black Expo Education Conferences - *What's Black Got to Do With It? AAMEP Findings from Research on Successful Schools/Programs for African American Male Students*

2010, IPS Infusion Conference Presenter

2010, Indiana Black Legislative Caucus Presenter

2010, National Council for the Education of Black Children Symposium – National Conference Presenter

Publications

Crayton, T. (2015). A consideration of power: Education and the political disengagement of urban secondary students. Saarbrücken, Germany. Lambert Academic Publishing

Crayton, T. (2014). The Taking of Freedom of Thought by State and Federal Policies: A Response to 2013 UCEA Annual Conference Presidential Address and Airola Plenary Session. University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Review, 55, (1), 14-19

Crayton, T., Scheurich, J., Bonds, V., Phelps, J., Currie, B., Elfreich, A., Bhathena, C., Kyser, T., Williams, N. (expected 2014). A new definitional framework for educational equity with explicated exemplars. Book chapter in Handbook of Urban School Leadership. Rowman & Littlefield. Editors are M. A. Khalifa, C Grant-Overton, & N. W. Arnold.

Crayton, T., Floyd, R., Hutchins, D., Jones, K. (2011). What's Black got to do with it?: Race and the crisis from non-discussion. AERA Annual Conference Plenary Session Presentation.